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BY

WAITMAN BARBE



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IN THE VIRGINIAS, \$1.00.

IN THE VIRGINIAS

STORIES AND
SKETCHES.❁❁



By WAITMAN BARBE.❁❁
Author of "Ashes and Incense"



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TO
CLARA LOUISE

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IN THE VIRGINIAS

THERE died a few years ago, in one of the extreme eastern counties of West Virginia, a gentleman whom I shall call, for the purposes of this tale, Henry Fairfax.

I am sure he would have been pleased with the name Fairfax himself, because of its intimate association with so many things Virginian. His home was but a short distance from the site of Lord Thomas Fairfax's historic "Greenway Court," where the haughty old English lord had his horses and his hounds and the finest estates in Virginia; and, like that old Lord Fairfax, Baron of Cameron, he, too, lived to a great age, as proud as Lucifer and the soul of all things honorable. And so I have called him a Fairfax.

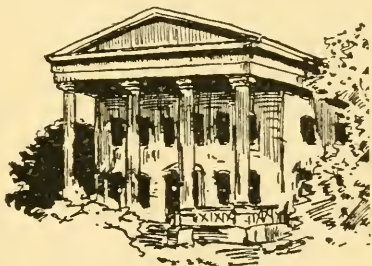
During his lifetime Henry Fairfax

was a resident of two states, although he had never moved from the old home bearing the proud name of Fairfax Hall, where he was born, and where his father before him had lived and died.

When the sword of civil strife dropped in '63 along the Blue Ridge and severed the fair old state in twain, Fairfax Hall fell on the western side. This was the bitterest blow of its owner's life, and he would never permit any one in his presence to refer to the fact that he no longer lived in the Old Dominion. During the quarter of a century of his enforced residence in the new state, he never admitted that he was a citizen of West Virginia to anybody except the tax collector. He continued to head his letters "Fairfax Hall, Virginia," and when he went down to the National Capital, his name always appeared on the register of the National Hotel as "Henry Fairfax of Virginia."

His wife died many years ago, long

before I knew him, and he lived with his granddaughter, Virginia, a lovely and beautiful girl, who was the pride and consolation of his old age. The name her mother had given her was Mary, but her mother having died and her father having gone to the bad and to the West about the same time, the old man took the child and changed her name to Virginia. He said that in his opinion every girl baby born in Virginia should be called Virginia, and he once cut the acquaintance of an old friend who had named his daughter Rhody (an abbreviation, as the old man argued, of Rhode Island) when he had asked him personally to call her Virginia.



Fairfax Hall was a roomy, rambling old house with generous chimneys and wide porticos, and about it were the fertile fields of the

upper Shenandoah and not far away the glassy Potomac. Many a distinguished personage had sampled the famous mint julep of Fairfax Hall. At least four Presidents had enjoyed the hospitality of the place, besides senators and distinguished authors, artists and diplomats. Henry Fairfax, in his younger days, had been Speaker of the Virginia House for several terms, and had served as consul at an important European port. He was a gentleman of liberal education, and, if he had been financially able, would have been a patron of literature and the arts. On the walls were portraits by Gilbert Stuart and Peale, and in the place of honor, in the wide hall, stood a cane which was originally the walking stick of the old lord of Greenway Court.

In a bundle of old letters which have come down as an heirloom, I find frequent references to the gay times at Fairfax Hall when the young people gathered there from Winchester and

all the upper Valley, and parties often from Washington and Baltimore. Those were the days of the old régime when the world took time to be hospitable and happy. These old brown and yellow letters tell how the daughter of a President danced with the young master of the Hall, and how he kissed her hand with something more than gallant courtesy. They hint, too, of a moonlight affair out on the banks of the Potomac between this same young scion of the House of Fairfax and a young French army officer about this same daughter of a President.

They tell of a visit of some weeks at Fairfax Hall from Napoleon's Director of the Treasury, who had negotiated the sale of the Territory of Louisiana to the United States government—the Marquis François de Barbé-Marbois—and who had become so much pleased with this country that he spent much of the remainder of his life here.

Yes, that was a gay and delightful

chapter in the history of the social life of the old "Northern Neck" of Virginia, but at the time of the events about to be related, all of these things were but a tradition and a memory.

The old family portraits were still on the walls, and now and then the hounds followed a red fox across the hills and far away towards Mt. Jackson, but the gay parties and the merry making at Fairfax Hall all belonged to the days before Sheridan went down into the Valley. The wide estate had gone piece by piece to make small but thrifty farms, until the biggest things about the Hall were its name and its memories.

Henry Fairfax had lost the keenness of some of his faculties, as well as most of his estate, and there were those who called him childish, but he retained his great love for his granddaughter (whom he always called his daughter) and for the old state of which he thought he was still a citizen.

“Daughter, I am going down to the capital to-day to watch the proceedings of the legislature for a few days,” and he kissed her good-bye and set off for Richmond on the James instead of Charleston on the Kanawha, for Richmond was still to him the capital of his state.

Frequently he would inquire of visitors from counties farther west about the coal and the timber and the crops “over in West Virginia.” Virginia humored his every wish, and loved the kind hearted old man as much as he loved her.

One day, sitting on the broad old front portico where his ancestors and their distinguished guests had sat and smoked and talked European and American politics, he called Virginia to his side, and, after silently stroking her soft chestnut hair for a long time and looking vacantly out towards the Potomac and the blue hills beyond, he said:

"Daughter."

"Yes, father."

"Daughter, how long is it that your mother has been dead?"

"Twenty years."

"And how old are you?"

"Why, you know, father, don't you?"

"No, I cannot remember."

"You have often told me that I was only a year old when my mother died."

"You are then just the age your mother was when she was married to that"——

The old man did not finish the sentence, but got up and walked back and forth on the veranda, leaning on the arm of Virginia. His hair was long and thin and white, his smooth-shaven face was furrowed and brown like a winter hillside, and his voice was as thin as the thread of life that bound him to Fairfax Hall, but he was remarkably erect, and, like all of his race, he was tall and muscular.

After another long silence, broken

only by the steady stroke of his cane on the old oak floor, he continued:

“Daughter, since the day when I buried your mother out yonder on the hill by the side of her mother, I have had only you to live for.”

“And have I not been kind and good to you?”

The old man bent down and kissed her lips. No other answer was needed.

Again he was silent; so long, this time, that Virginia said:

“Father, I am sure there is something you want to tell me. What is it?”

He sat down in the big old chair, with Virginia at his feet, and continuing to stroke her hair, he said:

“Your father, if still alive, is somewhere in the far West. I hope he will never return; he will not dare. I was always opposed to your mother’s marrying him. He was from up somewhere in New York, and I never wanted to have anything to do with him, but your mother, poor girl, thought she

loved him. It was a blessing to her that she died when she did, and I want you to profit by her sad experience. Will you make me a promise?"

"What is it, father?"

"Bring me the family record."

Virginia went and fetched it.

"Promise me on this old family record, out of which every trace of your father's name has long since been erased, that you will never marry anybody but a Virginian."

This pledge was doubtless suggested by the fact that among the young fellows who sometimes called at Fairfax Hall was one named Perry Blair, a young man from Harrisburg, Pa., who was connected with the second surveying corps then engaged in laying out the Shenandoah Valley (now the Norfolk & Western) railroad, after a delay of ten years from the first survey, caused by the panic of 1873. No hint was given that Blair was meant, but if the old man did not think of him, it is

certain that Virginia did. But she promptly answered: "I promise."

The railroad, the building of which proceeded with reasonable rapidity after so long delay, ran through a corner of the Fairfax lands which still belonged to the original estate. Henry Fairfax, although in greatly reduced circumstances, gladly gave the right of way and prevailed upon many of his neighbors to do likewise. He manifested great interest in the building of the road and said he hoped it would never be charged of him that he had ever impeded progress and improvement.

It was about this time, also, that the "boom-town" epidemic was sweeping over some sections of the country, leaving in its trail, a little later, destruction and desolation. It first prevailed in the West and afterwards came to the South where, in some sections, it spread like the smallpox. In some parts of

Virginia it was very virulent, and West Virginia had a few sporadic cases. The microbes of this dread disease were carried in the mouths of land sharks and in certain newspaper articles.

Instead of quarantining against it, whole communities would strive to see which could get the worst case of it and keep it longest. Many of the attacks proved fatal.

One day a stranger came to Fairfax Hall, and told the venerable owner that he wanted to purchase a tract of land down on the railroad. He said he represented a "syndicate" who intended to build a new town. He said he was authorized to offer Mr. Fairfax enough stock in the company to pay him many times over the worth of the land. They would "let him in on the ground floor," and it would make him once more a rich man. All he had to do was to deed the company the land and take the company's certificates of stock in exchange.

The old man was greatly pleased with the proposition, and partially gave his consent, but asked for a little time to think about it. That afternoon Perry Blair, whose duties still kept him in that vicinity, came over and Mr. Fairfax, who had taken a liking to him, although he would not have acknowledged it, told him all about the plan to build a new town and make money. Blair very promptly and very earnestly urged him not to enter into any such scheme. If he wanted to sell the land, and the men would pay for it, that was all right, but their proposition was a treacherous one.

When the agent, who called himself a "promoter," came again, Fairfax told him that he would have nothing to do with his enterprise.

But the glowing colors in which the promoter had painted the picture of the proposed new town, the rapidity and profit at which the building lots could be sold, had made a great

impression on the old man, and he turned it over and over in his mind, and, like a snowball, it grew with the turning.

One day he announced to Virginia that he intended to build a town and call it Fairfax City. He had worked out all the details of it. He was sure that many of his old friends would be glad of the opportunity to buy lots, and he hoped to leave her in good circumstances when he died.

Virginia was afraid that the idea was a little too large and not quite practicable, but she agreed with him that it would do no harm to try.

Fairfax sent at once for Perry Blair to survey and lay off the proposed new town.

Blair, glad of the opportunity to do anything for Virginia or her grandfather, staked off the ground and made the necessary plat. Fairfax had already selected names for the streets of the new Fairfax City. The principal ones were to be called Virginia,

Washington, Madison, Jefferson, Patrick Henry, Randolph, Berkeley, Lee, Preston, Tyler, and Jackson.

The next step was to put the lots of the future Fairfax City on the market.



One or two of Henry Fairfax's old friends promised to take two or three lots each, on condition that one hundred lots were sold. There the sales stopped. Not a cent had been spent or received.

Blair, who was staying for a few weeks at Fairfax Hall, at the earnest request of the old man, "in order to help along with the enterprise," spent more time in attempting to further a little plan of his own than he did in building Fairfax City. Virginia was courteous to him always, but he soon found that instead of getting to be with her as much as formerly, she avoided him. Occasionally, however, some word or act of hers, when she was

off her guard, made him believe that she was not anxious for him to leave the place. She had all at once become a mystery to him, a mystery which he determined to solve.

Meantime the old gentleman paid no attention whatever to the young people. He had no thought save for the success of his cherished scheme to found a town which should bear his name, and thereby be able, also, to leave a good snug sum to his beloved granddaughter. As the lots were not selling, he got Virginia to write for him one day the following letter:

FAIRFAX HALL, VIRGINIA, 8 JULY, 1884.

To the Editor of the Post, Washington, D. C.:

MY DEAR SIR—It affords me very great pleasure to write once more a communication for your excellent journal. Many years ago I was frequently permitted to be heard through your columns on questions of public concern, and, whilst what I am now about to say is not on any subject of statecraft, it is, I assure you, my dear sir, a question of public interest and importance.

You and your many readers will be glad to hear that I have had laid off a town site on a part of the

Fairfax estate, and that I am now in the process of building a city to which I have given the name (without undue egotism, I think) of Fairfax City. Streets have been laid out and have been named as follows:

Virginia, Washington, Madison, Jefferson, Patrick Henry, Randolph, Berkeley, Lee, Preston, Tyler, Jackson, etc.,—names which you will be glad to unite with me in honouring. I am allowing the lots to be sold at \$100 each, and expect to dispose of at least one hundred of them during the present summer.

No buildings have as yet been erected, and I shall leave that matter entirely to the purchasers.

Mr. Perry Blair, an excellent young man and competent civil engineer, has made a survey of the grounds, and the plat may be seen by any so desiring at my home, Fairfax Hall, in Virginia, where you, my dear sir, and all others, whether interested in the future of Fairfax City or not, will receive a most cordial welcome.

I have had a large number of lots laid off by Mr. Blair, so that as many of my friends as possible may be accommodated. I assume that no description of them or their location is necessary further than to say that they are on the Fairfax estate, in the upper Shenandoah Valley in Virginia.

With assurances of my sincere regards, I am, sir, your obedient servant,

HENRY FAIRFAX, of Virginia.

A few days later he was indignant

beyond measure upon receiving the following:

WASHINGTON, D. C., JULY 10, '84.

Henry Fairfax, Esq.:

DEAR SIR—Your favor at hand. Shall we insert it as paid matter? Our rates are 25c a line, counting eight words to the line. We await your reply.

Yours, etc.,

PUBLISHERS THE POST.

The old gentleman was wild with indignation. He considered it a personal insult.

"It's a cowardly, base, infamous insult," he said, as he threw the letter to Perry Blair. "They know that I am too old to resent it personally. Before the war any gentleman could have a communication published, and would receive the thanks of the editor instead of an insult. It's an infamous proceeding, sir, infamous! I have a mind to go to Washington immediately, and make the cur apologize. I might have known better than to expect courteous treatment outside of Virginia. If I only had a son to challenge the fellow,

and wipe out this insult to the Fairfax name!"

He was so wrought up that Virginia was greatly alarmed, fearing that the excitement might result seriously. She tried to calm him, but the more he thought of the matter the more outrageous seemed the insult. At last, in despair, she begged Blair to promise to secure an apology or avenge the affront.

Perry saw the ridiculous nature of the situation, but he would have done anything for Virginia, even to thrashing a dozen editors. So he promised that he would demand an apology at once. And this is how he did it:

FAIRFAX HALL, WEST VIRGINIA, JULY 12, 1884.
Publishers the Post, Washington, D. C. :

DEAR SIRs—Your note in reply to Mr. Henry Fairfax's letter, relating to the sale of certain town lots, has been handed to me. Mr. Fairfax is a very old gentleman, being now more than 80, and he fully believes that your refusal to publish his letter without pay is a personal insult. He is much wrought up over it, and the effect on his feeble

health may be serious. Please humor him and relieve his family by writing a letter of apology and explanation. It will greatly please him, and will be appreciated by his family as an act of great kindness.

Yours very truly,

PERRY M. BLAIR.

Two days later the mails brought to Henry Fairfax a tender and gracious letter from the editor of the *Post*, full of apologies.

When Virginia read it to the old man a great burden was lifted from his heart, tears filled his eyes, and, slapping Perry on the back, he exclaimed: "Blair, you're a noble fellow! What a pity you are not a Virginian!"

Then, kissing Virginia on the cheek, he said:

"Daughter, what can we do to repay our young friend for wiping this stain from the Fairfax escutcheon?"

Virginia blushed red as the old fashioned roses that grew down by the gate, and, kissing the old man in return, she said:

"I don't know, father."

"I do not want any reward for so small a service," said Perry. "I would do anything in my power to please Virginia—or you, sir."

This was said to Virginia rather than to her grandfather, but she stood with her head down, and did not trust herself to look at him.

Nothing further was said on the subject then, but that night, when Virginia kissed her grandfather goodnight, he put his arm about her and said:

"Daughter, do you remember the promise you once made to me?"

"Yes, father, I remember," and, going to her own room, she threw herself on the bed and wept until she fell asleep.

Perry did some serious thinking that night, too, and the next day he watched for an opportunity to speak to Virginia. She tried to avoid him, but he would not be baffled, and, while her grandfather slept in his big chair, he walked down the lane and met her

coming home in the twilight from a neighbor's house, whither she had gone on an errand.

He told her in earnest words the old, old story, which she had read in his actions over and over again, and, taking both her hands in his, he held them as in a vice.

"Here we both stop in the path of life," he said, "until my question is answered. Have you avoided me lately because you do not love me, Virginia?"

"No, that is not the reason, but I can never marry you, Perry. I have made a sacred promise which I cannot break."

Perry's mind was filled with visions of a rival suitor, but he was too much in love with Virginia to abdicate in favor of any man on the face of the earth. Finally she told him frankly and fully the whole story of her mother's unfortunate marriage, how her grandfather had been both father

and mother to her through all her life, and how she had promised him that she would not marry outside of their own people.

"The promise may have been a foolish one," she said, "but he intended it only for my own happiness, and I would not do anything to displease him who has been as kind and good to me as my mother could have been. No, Perry, I cannot break my promise."

"But if the promise had never been made—if you were free—"

"I cannot break my promise."

And they walked in silence to the house, where the old man was still sleeping like a child in the big easy chair.

The next day Perry said good-bye to Fairfax Hall, and left for his home in Pennsylvania. Before going he told Mr. Fairfax that if he could ever help him in his Fairfax City enterprise, to send for him. Virginia's good-bye was not so brave as she struggled to make

it, and she watched him until he was lost from view beyond a turn in the road—watched him with mute lips and a sinking heart, for Hope and Happiness rode away from her with Perry Blair that day down the lane, while Love stayed by in the old house with her and her childish and devoted grandfather.

The failure of his cherished plan to build a thriving town, and give to it his name, had a pronounced effect upon the old man's spirits. For some months his great interest in the enterprise had kept him up, but when the collapse came he lost hope and heart, and a few days after Perry's departure he took to his bed.

A week later Perry rang the old goblin-headed knocker at Fairfax Hall, and Virginia opened the door. She was so much surprised that she could only say:

“Why, Perry!”

He was beaming all over with hap-

piness, and, taking her by the hand, immediately led her, half forcibly, to the bedside of her grandfather. Before she could fully realize what he was doing, he said:

“Mr. Fairfax, I have come back to ask for the hand of your granddaughter.”

The old man, after two or three efforts, raised himself up on one elbow, and, looking at Virginia with an expression of unutterable grief, said in a voice feeble with age and trembling with emotion:

“Daughter, have you broken your promise?”

Virginia knelt down and kissed the furrowed cheek and replied:

“No, father, I have not told Mr. Blair that I would marry him—I have told him I could not.”

Perry sat down by the side of the bed, took the old man's hand and placed in it a piece of paper, saying as he did so:

"I know all about the promise which Virginia has made, and I do not ask her to violate it. I believe I am eligible."

"What is this, Virginia? I cannot see. Read it to me, my child. I have not meant to be unkind to you, but I would rather take you with me to the cold clay, out there on the hill, where your mother sleeps, than that you should suffer as she did. Read it, daughter, read it!"

Virginia looked at it, and handed it back to Perry.

"Have you anything against me personally?" asked Perry, as he laid the bit of paper on the edge of the bed.

"Nothing," said Mr. Fairfax, "you have been very kind to Virginia and me, very kind."

"Then here are my credentials"—and he read the memorandum:

"Perry Madison Blair, born at Harrisburg, Pa., Jan. 23, 1862. Son of Henry M. Blair, also a native of Harrisburg, Pa., whose father, Col.

Perry Madison Blair, was born in Fauquier County, Virginia, and married Betty Mason, daughter of the Honorable Stuart Page Mason, of Virginia."

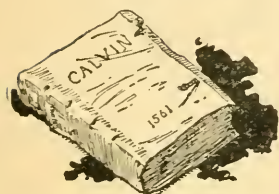
"I got this out of the old Bible at home. I was not born in Virginia, neither was your granddaughter—she was born in West Virginia. Her grandparents were born in Virginia; so were mine. I do not ask her to break her promise. I am a Virginian in blood as much as she."

Virginia had slipped her hand into Perry's, and Henry Fairfax, laying his thin skeleton hand across theirs, said:

"Daughter, I knew you would keep your promise."



THE PREACHER OF THE THREE CHURCHES



IN a little old town, west of the Blue Ridge, there used to be a man who, the people said, worshipped the Lord and served the devil. He preached Calvinism and eternal damnation on Sundays, and drew a rosined bow across an old violin behind closed doors on week days.

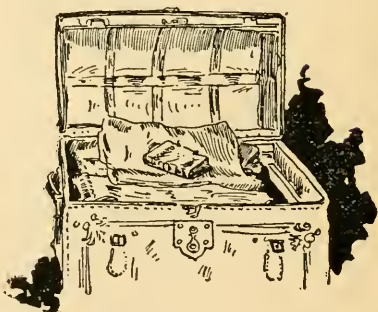
The town also contained a brood of lawyers, an old doctor, and a young one, a school teacher, some forty experienced gossips, a hundred or so dogs, and about four hundred other inhabitants.

The preacher didn't really live in the village, but a mile out on the

country road, and preached for two other congregations besides the one in the village.

He was a young bachelor whom the spinsters frequently invited to their tea parties, and he made his home with a family who loved him, and who faithfully kept the secret of his violin playing from the public.

The Reverend Balak Mather was a New Englander, and had accepted the call from the three churches in the south without making any inquiry as to the salary he was to receive or the amount of work he would be expected to do. He thought the call was a divine one, and, gathering up his fiddle and his Bible, he put the former in the bottom and the latter in the top of his trunk, and answered the call in person, just as he would have obeyed



a command from President Lincoln to take a gun and go down and shoot these same brethren at the three churches. He never questioned a call from his God or his country.

Arriving at the three churches, he found a scattered membership of Presbyterians, hospitable and cordial, but as firm in the faith and as strict in the creed as the New Englander himself; and they would have been shocked beyond expression if they had known that their new pastor not only played a fiddle, but had actually brought it with him in the same box with his Holy Bible.

Nor did the conscience of the Reverend Balak Mather approve of his conduct. He felt that he was bartering his soul away little by little for the string that intoxicates. All of his life he had prayed earnestly but hopelessly to be delivered from the temptation—prayed every morning that he might be able to live that day with-

out touching the unclean thing. But every evening when the twilight came on and a loneliness came over him, such as only the choice spirits of the world are permitted to suffer, he would forget the vow of the morning, take the old violin out of its old green case, close the windows and the doors, get down in the darkest corner of the room, and, gently touching the strings, call forth the souls of all the old loved ones now dead and gone. All the sweet voices, all the childhood tears, and tales, and fancies, every kiss of his mother's lips, every form of speech that love had learned, seemed to him to come out of that old violin.

And when the night was stormy and the wind howled and moaned, he would close his Bible, take up the violin, and, with trembling hand and guilty conscience, strike the strings until all the sins that he had ever committed came up out of the past, and he could hear the wails and sobs

of all those who had gone down, down into the place of everlasting torment; and the soul of the violin seemed to mingle with his own soul in an agony of unutterable misery and woe, for he felt that he loved the instrument with an unholy passion, as a man may love and be led to the depth of hell by a wicked and beautiful woman.

His congregations knew nothing of all this. Their pastor was a faithful shepherd, leading his little flocks by the pure waters of Calvinism and by the green meadows of righteous living.

The more he yielded to the temptations of the siren fiddle the more he atoned for it by preaching the doctrine of punishment and the law of retribution. And the more he fiddled the longer he preached to make up for it, so that sometimes his sermons would last an hour and a half or two hours. But his congregations were not made up of end-of-the-century churchgoers, who tire at a fifteen-

minutes sermon, and who ask for a new pastor if the sermon lasts over thirty minutes. The three little flocks of the Rev. Balak Mather's keeping believed in devoting the entire Sabbath—they never called it Sunday—to the worship of the Lord, and, as the preacher's sermons grew in length, he grew in popularity.

One day, about a year and a half after accepting the call to the three churches, the minister was sent for to go thirty miles or more into the mountain to conduct the funeral of an old man, who had once heard him preach in the village. Of course he went, for he never refused to go where he could render a service.

On his return he stopped for the night at a little log house in the mountain, where the cracks in the walls were not more conspicuous than the love and cheer about the hearthstone.

One of the children was sawing away on a fiddle when the preacher

entered the house, but immediately hid it when he saw the clerical coat of the stranger. The minister's trained and sympathetic ear had caught the singularly rich and sweet notes of the instrument, and he at once asked the lad to get it for him. Taking it lovingly in his hand, he pulled the bow across the strings, held it close to his ear, touched another chord or two, looked at it critically, saw a dim and blurred inscription on it, and read:

Antonius Stradivarius
Cremonen. 1697.

If Saul of Tarsus had appeared before him, he would not have been more surprised than he was to find there, in a hut in the mountain, an instrument bearing the name of the great Italian violin maker.

"Where did you get it?" he inquired of the boy.

"Don't know; guess we've always had it."

Then the preacher-fiddler ran out to the stable where the boy's father was feeding the horses—rushed out like an excited schoolboy—to ascertain, if he could, something about the wonderful instrument.

“That fiddle?” said the mountaineer. “That’s the finest fiddle in this part of Virginy, I reckon. It’s purty old, but I guess it aint much the worse for wear. Some feller has cut his name on it there, but I guess that don’t hurt it none. Where did I git it? Oh, I got that fiddle down in New Orleans when I was down there with Ben Butler’s crowd, but you musn’t ask me how I got it, for I don’t want to tell a parson no lies.”

“But, my good fellow,” said the parson, “don’t you know that it is worth a big sum of money?”

“How much’ll ye give me fur it?”

“I haven’t enough money to buy it, I’m afraid, but I’ll give you all I have

in the world, which is about three hundred dollars."

He could probably have bought it for less than twenty-five, but he was too honest to try to drive an unfair bargain, even for a Stradivarius.

It was now the mountaineer's turn to be amazed. He had never dreamed that any fiddle in the world could be worth half that much money. He thought the preacher had lost his senses.

"You may take the fiddle," he said, "but I ain't agoin' to skin you that way. You may know what hymn books and catechisms cost, but you're off on catgut, parson. I've played 'em all my life, and I never seen one that was wuth over twenty-five or thirty dollars. But if you want it, an' bein's its you, an' you'll give me that there hoss of yourn in the stable, why I reckon you may take the fiddle. I won't take no three hundred dollars

of any parson's money for an old fiddle. It ain't wuth it."

And so the bargain was made, the honest preacher telling the owner that if he ever sold the instrument for more than he gave for it, he would hunt him up and divide the profits with him.

That night this servant of the Lord forgot to ask the mountaineer's family to join with him in prayer, and yet his heart was full of thankfulness and love for all things in heaven and on earth. Out among the trees, under the lonesome sky, he put the old Italian violin to his shoulder, and tears of love and joy filled his eyes as he stroked its graceful neck as a lover would stroke the tresses of his fair bride. And the music that was made that night in the mountain! The sweetness and the richness and the compass of it! And the woe and the terror of it! For the player was a true maestro, and this perfect Stradi-

varius seemed to hold in its keeping the tender love and the burning passion and the implacable hate of the Italian race—that Italy which made poets and painters and sculptors and murderers.

He understood how it was that when Paganini played they said he was in league with the devil, exchanging smiles with a ghastly figure beside him, and why the multitudes followed him in wild frenzy through the streets of Genoa; for the two centuries be-

tween Antonio Stradivarius, the fiddle-maker of Cremona, and Balak Mather, the preacher-fiddler of the three churches, had crowded that old violin with memories of all the victories and failures, all the glory and all the shame of the human race, and the preacher-fiddler evoked all of these memories and



heard, with his own ears, that night, alone in the mountain, out under the everlasting stars, the story of the world's tragedy!

At least it seemed to him so, for he was a true musician to the tips of his long bony fingers.

To those who love not the divine instrument, all this will appear absurd and strained, but it is written for those who know what it is to be overcome by the mysterious and mighty power of an Ole Bull, a Sarasate, a Eugene Ysaye or a Cesar Thomson—an influence that has the power to intoxicate like wine, like the rare old wines which have in them the sunshine of heaven and the fine virtues of the soil.

But this has nothing to do with our preacher, who was taken to the village the next day by the mountaineer. The Stradivarius stayed at the preacher's boarding house, and the preacher's horse went back to the mountain.

Then came the fiercest battle of Balak Mather's life, and the turning point. Unconsciously and unwillingly, he yielded, little by little, to the softening appeals of his musical nature, and his sermons to the three churches began to be more about love and less about the law—more religion and less theology. His congregations noticed it, and liked it—in spite of themselves. Some of the sisters said he must be in love, and they discussed it at their quilting parties. His actions, as well as his words, became more tender; he spent more time with the poor and the sick, and, wherever he went, he was a benediction.

Many of his flock followed the lead of their shepherd, and the gospel of love became the creed of the new propaganda at the three churches.

But the upheaval was bound to come sooner or later, and it was only strange that it had been delayed so long.

One day the report was started that the preacher played the fiddle. By the time it had reached the other end of the village, which was less than an hour, it said that he had lost his faith in the teachings of the Bible; that he had his rooms full of fiddles, and that he sometimes kept step to his own playing.

Many of his flock said they didn't believe a word of it, but they passed the story on, and one of the good sisters thought it her Christian duty to ride over to the other two churches and tell the news.

In the minds of these good men and women the fiddle was inseparably associated with the disreputable dance hall and wicked actor-people, and was, in short, the devil's own instrument. A member of the church found guilty of playing it would have been remonstrated with gently but firmly, and, if he persisted in his wicked ways, would have been expelled. The report, there-

fore, that their beloved pastor was a fiddle player shocked and scandalized them quite as much as if it had been said that he had been seen drunk in the public street. It was the sole topic of conversation, and, in the mouths of expert and long-experienced gossips, it took on many artistic embellishments.

Some of his friends, however, refused to believe the story, and defended him with such faithfulness that in a few days there began to appear indications of a serious schism in the three churches.

One Saturday afternoon a committee of the elders waited upon the Rev. Balak Mather at his boarding house. They found him with his well-worn Bible open before him, at work upon the sermon for the morrow. The room was not filled with fiddles — there was not even one in sight — and the books about him were not such as a servant of the devil would revel in. Their

courage began to fail them, and they began to wish that they had shouldered the unpleasant duty on a committee of the sisters. After talking about the weather, the finances of the church, the crop prospects, the approaching county election, and the weather some more, until the situation became painfully embarrassing, the brother who had been chosen previously as spokesman plunged into the subject by saying: "Ah — Brother Mather, I suppose you have heard the scandalous reports which have been started about you by evil tongues — about your indulging in the unholy practice of fiddle-playing. Of course none of us believe it for a moment —"

"Oh, of course, not for a moment!" put in the other members of the committee in chorus.

"But we wanted to be able to deny it officially before it gets any further. Brother Jones," he said, turning to another of the elders, "suppose you

draw up an official denial of the whole infamous business, and we will all sign it right here."

Then the spokesman stroked his beard three times, and felt much relieved.

Brother Jones got ready to write.

"My good friends," said the preacher, "I do not know what you have heard, but if it is that I play the violin, as well as pray and preach, and try to help the sick and the poor, I must confess to my guilt. Up to within the past few weeks I yielded to it as to a besetting sin, and prayed against it every day of my life, but I no longer consider it such. Next to the service of my God and my fellowman, I love an old violin which I have yonder in that trunk."

And he took out the instrument and laid it before them.

His boldness and earnestness completely overwhelmed them, and they sat speechless.

Then the preacher played as even he had never played before—played as though pleading his own cause before God and man—the tones now wailing and crying in despair, now glorious with triumphant hope and victory. The depths of his soul were broken up, and he wept, and the eyes of the elders were not dry.

When they left, they said one to another, “verily he hath a devil.”

The rest is soon set down.

Shortly after the committee of elders had presented to the three churches their formal report of what they had heard and seen, the preacher-fiddler put his Bible and his violin into his trunk—the latter accidentally getting uppermost this time—and after visiting every sheep of his three little flocks and saying to them he



hoped they would, sometime, allow themselves to believe that music, even fiddle music, was not an unpardonable sin, he went away.

One night, a little while ago, the writer of this sat with one of the old elders of the old church of the little old village west of the Blue Ridge in the Metropolitan Opera House in New York, and, while the audience came in, and the fine ladies in the boxes on either side discussed the dresses of the fine ladies in the boxes on the other side, he related to me the main facts of the story which I have repeated here.

It was a great music-festival night, and the Boston Symphony Company was to give the first of a series of six concerts. The house was crowded, for it had been announced that with the company there was to appear Yriarte, a Belgian virtuoso, who had

been turning the heads of the musical people on the other side of the waters—Paganini, they said, had come back to earth. Of course Society, which always writes its name with a big S, was there, but there were others, also. There were pointed out to us in the audience the great composers Dvorak and DeKoven, Rafael Joseffy, the beautiful Emma Eames, Emma Juch, Lola Beeth, Melba, Jean de Reszke, and others.

The concert began. The orchestra played something which I have forgotten, but which made nearly as much noise as Berlioz's "Requiem Mass," and nearly took the breath away from the people near the stage.

Then there was a great flutter among the beautiful birds in the boxes, a craning of fair necks, a jabbering among the foreign-looking long-haired musical-appearing men near us, and, after what seemed an interminable wait, the Bel-

gian came on with an old tobacco-colored fiddle in his hand. He had a face like the pictures of Saint-Saens, and he stood before the great audience like one who had a message to deliver of life or death. He held the violin and bow both under his left arm, and, before beginning to play, he reached out his right hand and held it there with his open palm down, as a preacher might have done in asking God's benediction on the human race. Then the violin came out from under his arm and the bow fell across it—and even the boxes were hushed.

Then a voice such as had never been heard on sea or land filled the hall, and all that was worth living for or dying for, seemed to sanctify the place—it was the voice of a Stradivarius in the hands of a maestro.

When he had finished, and had again held out his long thin hand in benediction, the audience broke into a wild

frenzy, such as the young virtuoso of Genoa is said to have produced in the Italian towns and villages three quarters of a century ago. People rushed onto the stage in the wildest excitement, among them being hundreds of ladies. They snatched the flowers from their bosoms and threw them at him, and the excitement was so great that it was totally impossible to go on with the concert that night. Only once before had anything approaching it been seen in this country on a similar occasion, and that was when New York went stark crazy over the wonderful Bulgarian pianist the winter before, when several women were badly hurt in the frenzied rush to touch the hem of his swallow-tail coat.

The two men from west of the Blue Ridge were among the last to leave the hall, and, as they did so, the old Presbyterian elder said to the young man by his side:

“That man was he whom we used to know at the three churches as the Rev. Balak Mather.” And then, after a long silence, “It is not a devil he hath, but something divine.”

THE KING'S DAUGHTER

THERE used to be, in one of the interior counties in the New Dominion, an absolute monarchy.

This kingdom was about the size of the realm of the Akoond of Mahoot, and embraced nearly the whole of one flourishing township. There was a lean mountain in it which split the evening cloud in two and divided the morning mist. And the eastern boundary of it was a river which made a horseshoe with which the foot of the mountain was shod.

Across the river from this realm the land rolled away in peace, as was becoming to the home of free institutions.

The lean mountain carried a huge boulder on the tip of its right shoulder, as if challenging the winds to

knock it off ; but the bald eagle nested in the clefts of it and was not afraid, and the wind gnawed at the alum rock until it looked like a giant honeycomb, made by the wind bees.

On the west the kingdom was bounded by the finest red-fox trail that a hound ever put a nose to, outside of the glade country.

On the south it was not bounded at all, for the king's possessions straggled away in that direction in triangles and all sorts of geometrical curiosities.

At the northern end the king had his home, and his dominion was bounded there only by the will of his wife.

It was, therefore, a unique kingdom, and is not set down on the maps, and the local chroniclers have failed to write the history of its rise and fall.

The first monarch was the last, and the royal household consisted of seven stalwart sons and a fair daughter, besides the queen of the king's bosom.

Besides these there were of mules and horses quite a number, a herd of little mountain oxen, ring-streaked and striped, and flocks of sheep scarcely larger than mountain rabbits, and the royal razor-back swine, which fed on the corn fields of the citizens of the realm. There were, also, of milch cows, some seven or eight.

The standing army consisted of the seven stalwart sons of the king.

The ruler was of the house of Goodrich, and he became king by the divine right of wanting to, and knowing how. He came unto his kingdom from Pennsylvania, and his kingdom came unto him little by little, excepting the prerogatives of a local preacher, which he brought with him. First, he bought a large tract of land, paying for it about the value of the squirrels that frolicked in its woods. Then he was elected a justice of the peace, and became a 'squire—and a 'squire is, as everybody knows, a very puissant man.

To these he added the powers of member of the school board, class leader, undertaker, timber dealer, money lender, mortgage holder, and Sunday-school superintendent.- When he took a notion to add to his estates he foreclosed a mortgage, or got himself appointed guardian of the minor children of some sister in the church, or cornered the coffin market. He married the young people, buried their children, attached their household goods.

He was authority on mountain theology and the history of the Jews, and, as a scientist, the teacher of the township school herself, although having attained the ripe age of nineteen years and some months, was not his superior.

Now the key to this kingdom was a sway in the back of the mountain, from which great sticks of timber, the chief and only valuable product of the realm, were slid down to the river where they were rafted and sold. There was but one road up to this hogback, and the

king owned it, and, by means of this monopoly, he was able to fix his own price on every log that was laid at the foot of the mountain.

Thus it was that he waxed rich off of the labor and necessities of his neighbors, for every stick of timber intended for the market must of necessity be sold to him at the foot of the mountain for whatsoever he was in a mood to give for it. And being a justice of the peace, and a Biblical scholar, a local preacher, a Sunday school superintendent, an undertaker, and the head of a large family, he generally was in the mood to pay about one-fourth as much as he could get for the same log on the other side of the mountain.

Thus it came about by a very plain process that 'Squire Goodrich became an absolute monarch in everything but the title and the tinsel trappings.

His impoverished subjects had often tried to find or make a road of their

own up the mountain side on land which he had not yet come into possession of, but every attempt had been given up—the cliffs were too many and too high, and so they were forced to continue to pay tribute to Cæsar at the foot of the mountain.

Now, among the subjects of the king there were, of course, certain young men who had the audacity to aspire to the hand of the king's daughter, whose name was Mary, and who was both good and rich, exactly as her name said. To be truthful, I must admit that she had never been in a boarding school, either at Staunton, Winchester, Lexington, or Lewisburg, and she (sad though the story be) was not up in *soirées* and the gentle art of murdering French, but she knew how to "bake a pie or cast a killing eye." She was the chief attraction at the Sunday school and at funerals, and she had the grace not to look with contempt upon the young fellows

because they had to pay tribute to her father, the king, at the foot of the lane leading up to the sway in the hogback.

Half of the young fellows of the neighborhood were, therefore, either in love with the princess or thought they were, which is much the same for all practical purposes. Two or three of them had gotten along so well with her that they had ventured in their rashness to speak to the king about it, but he only laughed at them, and told them that no suitor would even be considered until he had first made a timber road of his own to the top of the mountain. This banter was supposed to effectually settle the matter.

Among these suitors was one John Merrill, who was the proud owner of five yoke of little steers and a few acres of timber land, and who, like all the rest, paid tribute to the king at the foot of the mountain. He had

good reason to believe that he stood well in the favor of the Princess Mary, but there was the king's challenge in the way. Love laughs at locksmiths and other things of man's feeble make, but it cannot look with contempt upon a hogback.

He explained the difficulty to the daughter of the king, and she hastened to suggest that a tunnel be digged or the mountain be blasted. But these suggestions, though born of love, were not eminently practical from an engineering point of view.

John went over every foot of the mountain, but it was of no avail. No log road could be constructed, not even for the hand of Mary, the king's daughter.

Meanwhile, Mary sat all day long by her chamber window with pencil and paper in her hand. She had lost interest in funerals and Sunday schools. She was studying out a great problem in civil engineering.

Then John went to the county seat and stayed for the space of two days, and, when he came home, there were papers in his pocket tied about with lawyers' tape.

His next step was to go to all of the little timber dealers like himself within hauling distance of the mountain, and engage every stick of timber they would have to sell for the next ten years, delivered at the foot of the king's road leading up the side of the hogback, agreeing to pay a much better price than the king had been giving. All this was done so quietly that the king knew nothing of it.

But Mary knew.

When the logs began to arrive, and the 'squire-king learned that they were for John Merrill, he was amazed. And when John told him that he held a ten years' lease on the mountain, and intended to haul the logs up himself with his five yoke of little oxen, the king's royal wrath was kindled. But

not all of his authority as justice of the peace, undertaker, Sunday-school superintendent, local preacher, mountain theologian and historian of the Jews could overawe John, for John had in his pocket the papers showing that 'Squire Goodrich had never bought that tract of land, leased it or had any title to it whatever. He had not even foreclosed a mortgage on it or paid for it so much as the value of the squirrels in its treetops. It belonged to some heirs living over in the vicinity of Woodstock, and the king had simply appropriated it as he had appropriated many other things not his own.

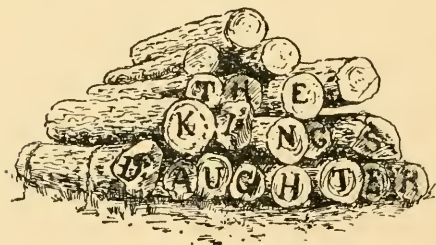
So John Merrill took legal possession of the road up the side of the hogback and the key to the king's domain, and, in due course of time, grew rich, even as the king had done, but with more honesty. Before the lease had expired he bought the hogback in fee simple, and became the sole

owner of the key to the old man's kingdom.

By that time he was himself a justice of the peace and a Sunday-school superintendent, and the king was deposed.

But the ex-king continued to hold till his death his positions as undertaker, local preacher and mountain theologian.

And of course Mary, the king's daughter—but it is well to take some things for granted.

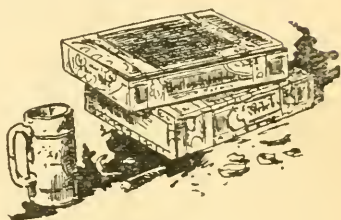


THE SKETCH CLUB BANQUET

THE nuts and fruits had been finished, and the cigars and story telling had commenced.

The company was a delightful one. Most of the members of the club had been abroad more or less, and the free and easy flow of anecdote and sparkle of wit took on a foreign color. There were bits of Paris, touches of Munich, and breezes from the valley of the Arno.

Doubtless there were better stories told than the one which I wrote down at three of the clock the next morning, but it was the only one remembered at that hour or that I can recall



now. It crowded all of the rest out of my mind.

The story was told by F., one of the club's distinguished gray-beards.

"It was in 1849," he said, "I think it was '49. I was in Paris, trying to learn to paint, along with a lot of other American enthusiasts, among whom was a young Virginian. He has won great distinction since then, and I shall call him simply Blank.

"All that we knew about him was that he lived with amazing cheapness and worked with prodigal extravagance, and that he began to reach for the coveted prizes. By and by he carried off one of them, and in due time he had captured everything in reach, and was the talk of the American section of the Parisian art world.

"His American fellow students, the American legation in Paris, and some other American citizens resident there decided to pay tribute to his remarkable success by giving a brilliant ban-

quet in his honor. The American Minister and his wife took great interest in it, and insisted that they be allowed to give the dinner at their residence.

“It was a splendid affair—enough to turn almost any young man’s head. The odor of a garden of roses pervaded the spacious rooms, and the champagne itself was not half so intoxicating as the beauty and the brilliancy of the ladies who had graciously lent their presence to do honor to the young painter of pictures from the hills of Virginia.

“The guest of honor sat by the side of the wife of the American Minister, but all through the dinner it was noticed, by those near him, that he was silent and ate nothing. He was so nervous that he spilled a glass of water on the table. The hostess and a pretty girl at his right tried in vain to engage him in conversation. He did not hear them. The young girl,

feeling piqued, turned to her companion on the right, and did not again speak to the young artist.

“From across the table I noticed the embarrassing situation, and tried to rally him with an attempt at a witticism, but my attempted wit and my effort to stir him up were alike unsuccessful. He sat there pale, haggard, bewildered, looking as though he were at the funeral of his dearest friend instead of being the guest of honor at a brilliant banquet and sitting between two of the fairest daughters that Columbia ever sent to France.

“When the dinner was over, Mr. D., Secretary of the American Legation, began the toasts by proposing the health of the young winner of the Paris prizes, accompanying his toast with a flattering eulogy.

“Mr. Blank, who had sat through the evening like a statue, suddenly jumped to his feet, not permitting Mr. D. to finish. His frame shook with emotion,

and he startled the guests by exclaiming:

“I can endure this thing no longer. You have sought to honor me, and I ought to be thankful. I am thankful. None of you can ever know how much I appreciate it—but I cannot bear it any longer. Away off yonder in the Virginia mountains is an old man who has toiled his life away that I might be here, and yet to-night there may not be a loaf of bread in his mountain home. I have often seen it so. That man is my father, and I cannot drink your wine while he has no bread. It would burn my throat like fire.

“There, too, is a young girl, fairer to me than the fairest in all this French capital, and yet the diamond in my hostess' hair would buy her a hundred gowns finer than she ever wore. That girl is my sister. I cannot enjoy the favor of your smiles and the benediction of your beauty while she sits there in a homespun dress.

“‘And among those same blue Virginia hills I used to know a maiden—but pardon me! I would serve any of you ladies here to-night on my knees, but I cannot take your praises—pardon me—the odor of the roses has made me faint!’

“And pressing his hands against his temples, he staggered out of the room and into the street before the astonished company could recover their senses.”



THE GYPSY TRAIL

The white moth to the closing bine,
The bee to the opened clover,
The gypsy blood to the gypsy blood
Ever the wide world over.

—Kipling.

EVERY summer the gypsy band made their camp on the trail which wound like a snake from the pineries of Maine to the orange groves of Florida.

They were of the pure Romany breed, who led the roving life of the trail for the love of it, and not a greasy band of loafers, come out of the city because they were too lazy to make a living in the hive. Tall and dark and straight were they, with regular features and with long, black hair curling



to their shoulders under great-brimmed hats—Romanies such as travellers say make picturesque the villages and vintage-fields of Hungary. They sometimes traded horses and told fortunes, but they didn't steal, and nothing was too good for any visitor to their tents.

Their horses were as fleet as the wind, and they were always ready to race, for a good snug bet, with any comer a-horse. The money they picked up this way was not inconsiderable, but the pleasure they got out of these trials of speed and mettle was much more to them than the silver pieces.

And they were always playing their violins—playing when they came, playing when they went away, and often leaving a savory squirrel untouched until it got cold because they had no time to eat, they had an engagement with their violins. Theirs was the first orchestra I ever heard, and I still think it was the best.

They used to pitch their tents in the upper meadow by the big road around the bend, above where the old sugar-camp was, and sometimes they would stay for two or three weeks, and then, when the night was black, they would creep away, playing their low sad wails, plaintive beyond description, with a lad, not a gypsy, at least in blood, following them sometimes till the morning broke, wondering if the golden harps, about which he had heard, did not make some such music. The thunder and roar of the great bands and orchestras sound to his grown-up ears like a hollow mockery compared with his memory of the wail of those three or four violins and a flageolet by the sugar-camp when the autumn night began to fall and those wild creatures, with the light of un-mixed Romany blood in their eyes, bent low as though crooning to a babe on the Hungary hills or the blue Danube, and caressed their instruments as



though they were of their own flesh and blood, while far away at some farm house a dog howled and howled as though his heart would break.

Sometimes they would sing words like these, sitting with uncovered heads while the lights went out in the tents:

The gypsy trail is over the earth,
And the winging bird his guide,
But like the stars his heart is true
Till back again at your side.

And if the night wind steals his soul,
And his body falls to clay,
His spirit wanders round the world,
And meets you at break of day.

O gypsy lass! O gypsy lass!
In the tent by the northern pine!
The sea gull waits for his mate in the cliff,
And the heart of the lad is thine.

Or sometimes a little song, of which the following refrain only is remembered—coming floating faintly back accompanied by the low weird wail

of the violin as the Romany put his dark face down close to the bow :

The night is here, the horses wait,
O gypsy, come away!
O gypsy, come away!
The time is here when wild birds mate,
O gypsy, come away!

One evening there came to the tents in the meadow a strange Romany on a jaded horse, and wearing a costume travel-stained, but finer than the rest, and in the eyes of the lad who watched him as he came galloping up to the tents he rode like a prince. His sombre jacket was set off with a bit of rich color, and there was gilt on his horse's trappings.

His hair was long and black and straight, and he was lithe and tall.

That night there was a gleam of ugly knives out under the big sugar trees, a death-grapple, and a sickening thud on the earth—and the lad who had heard and seen ran away to his

home, frightened nearly to death, and hid his head under the covers.

That night the dog at the farm house on the hill far away howled all the night long.

That night, also, the gypsies broke camp and stole away, but there was no sound of violin or flageolet; and with the rest, it was said, there rode, tied to her saddle, a Romany lass who had been called by the name of the Gypsy Queen by the visitors to the tents, because of her picturesque beauty—rode with her hands bound together and her limbs fastened to the saddle, and the bridle of her horse tied to another's saddle-girth. This was the story told by a belated countryman who claimed to have met them far down the road beyond where the little schoolhouse stood.

The next morning the strange horseman was found lying on his face under the big sugars with three ugly gashes in his side, his life having almost

poured away in 'the rich blood that soaked down into the black soil at the roots of the trees.

He was picked up and carried to the nearest house, and an effort made to save his life.

On the third day the Romany lass, who was known to the country people thereabouts as the Gypsy Queen, and who had been carried away tied to her saddle, startled the good people of the farm house by



appearing at the door. She was made welcome, and the tender touch of her hand brought back to life the handsome stranger, inch by inch, full strength coming only with the coming spring.

When they went away the Romany offered the household a handful of gold, but they would accept only his thanks over and over and his tears of gratitude.

The autumn came again, but the gypsy tents were pitched no more in the meadow by the sugar camp, and since then the gypsy trail has been deserted. The lad waited and waited to hear the low sad wail of the Romanies' violins and the moaning of the lonesome hound on the distant hill, but heard them no more save in memory, which catches the far away sound now and then wafted on the air when the twilight falls and memory sits down and waits.

“For a boy's will is the wind's will, and the thoughts of youth are long, long thoughts.”

Two or three years after the departure of the two gypsies, a letter was received at the house where they had been so tenderly cared for, bearing a foreign stamp and the postmark of Budapest. It contained a photograph of two—yes, of three—and one was a tiny Romany with hair and eyes and mouth wondrous like the lass who was

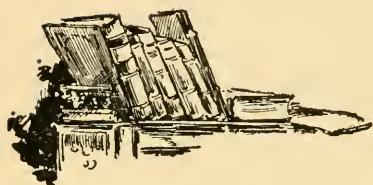
called the queen of the gypsies by the visitors to the tent on the old trail by the sugar camp in the new Virginia.

The letter contained something of much value besides the picture and the words of tender affection and gratitude, and it was signed,

LOUIS TELEKI.

And the mystic emblems at the top of the paper made the people who received it, and all the neighborhood, hold even unto this day that they had entertained unawares a genuine prince of the old wandering and fighting Magyar race.

A LITERARY ATMOSPHERE



THIS is the story of a man who undertook to follow a Jekyll-and-Hyde career of literature and the law.

In the fall of 1891 a new sign was hung out in front of a modest office in a West Virginia town, reading:

BYRNE HILLARD,
ATTORNEY-AT-LAW AND NOTARY
PUBLIC.

Hillard was a young fellow who had finished the law course a few months before at the University, and had located in a delightful old town in the Ohio Valley, and was waiting for a victim. But the town's population was decorated with so many ex-governors,

and ex-judges, and ex-honorables, and big railroad attorneys, that his name was obscured by their brilliancy, and the victims passed by on the other side.

Fortunately, he had inherited from a long line of ancestors a marked talent for taking things easy; indeed, there had always been a streak of genius in the family for sitting down and waiting, and it had cropped out early in Byrne. If all things come to him who waits, there was no good reason why Hillard should not have had a mortgage on the earth in due time. But the ex-governor across the street, the ex-judge around on Court Square, and the big railroad attorneys got the legal practice while he got the practice in waiting, which would probably prove very valuable to him, as he seemed likely to have a good deal of it to do.

One day it occurred to him that while he was waiting for the big fellows to die, and leave to him some of their practice, he would write a novel—he

would follow in the footsteps of his distinguished fellow Virginian and fellow lawyer, the writer of "Marse Chan," and become an Author. (In his opinion it ought always to be written with a big A.)

Having once contracted the fever to make a book, nothing but death or matrimony will cure it, and, in Hillard's case, neither of these physicians seemed near at hand. Publishers sometimes try to sweat the fever out of the patient suffering with this dread disease, but death is the only thing this side of matrimony that will cure the malady.

It was a bad case with the poor fellow from the start, and constantly grew worse. In his feverish dreams he could see his name in big letters on the title page, and hear people introduce him as "our rising young Author and lawyer."

Perhaps he inherited a taint of this disease, for his great, great uncle on his mother's side (who was a Plympton

of Surry county, and related to the Braxtons) had written "A Treatise on the Culture of Mint." The manuscript of this valuable work was found after the old gentleman's death, and was purchased by the Virginia legislature and published at public expense for the benefit of all of the gentlemen of the Commonwealth. A few rare copies of it may still be found. It contains that celebrated declaration, which shares the honors with the Declaration of Independence, that "mint will grow to perfection only on the grave of a good Virginian."

Another ancestor (also a Plympton, had written a poem in forty-two cantos of blank verse on "The Pleasures of Domestic Life on a Virginia Plantation, with Some Reflections on the Education of Youth." This dissertation possessed the merit of having the right number of syllables in each line, and, moreover, each line began with a capital letter. These two reasons justi-

fied the author and her friends in calling it poetry. Unfortunately, this great poem was never published, for it was not the proper thing in those days for high ladies to become authors of anything except the most charming and lengthy letters, some of which were equal to Jefferson's state papers in dignity and in pureness of diction.

And so, possessing the inherited genius of being able to wait patiently for his law practice, and the likewise inherited taste and talent for mint julep and poetry, Hillard naturally fell an early and easy victim to the literary fever.

But taste and talent—even genius—count for nothing in themselves. To be able to turn a couplet or write an acceptable story, one must have dilated his nostrils for a reasonable length of time in a literary atmosphere. Byrne Hillard had read this in several Boston publications and knew it was true, and he further knew that a chemical test

would reveal about every other ingredient except the literary in the atmosphere of the town in which he was preparing to begin his career as an able lawyer and famous author—his dual existence.

It was a desperate situation. There were plenty of people in the town who had good libraries and read them, who took the magazines for the articles and not for the pictures, and whose opinions on a new book were likely to be true and fresh; but as they had breathed common West Virginia air all of their lives, and not a literary atmosphere, they, of course, could make no claim to being even on the fringed edges of the literary world.

Hillard realized that this was a difficulty which must be overcome before he could even venture to select a title for his novel, and so he evolved an original scheme. He proceeded to connect himself with certain great literary centres by means of sympathetic currents;

that is, he undertook to establish direct communication between himself and a dozen distinguished authors by means of Uncle Sam's admirable postal service. He thought that if he could not go to the mountain he could bring the mountain to him.

From an abundance of riches he selected twelve towering names and addressed to each of them the following letter:

—— W. VA., Dec. 1, 1891.

Do you think it advisable for a young man who lives far removed from the outer limits of the literary atmosphere to undertake any literary work?

What can be done to overcome this disadvantage?

Also, I beg you to do me the honor to glance at the enclosed verses, which I wrote while in school, and kindly tell me if there is any merit in them.

I have adopted the law as a profession, but find time in the midst of my practice to devote an occasional hour to the higher pursuit of literature.

Yours very truly,

BYRNE HILLARD.

P. S. — I enclose stamp for reply.

B. H.

The first answer received was not

especially encouraging. It was this, printed on a neat little slip of paper :

BOSTON, Dec. 5, 1891.

Dr. Homos regrets that he is not able to answer all of the inquiries that come to him from unknown friends, and must beg to be excused.

Nor was the second any more inspiring :

NEW YORK, Dec. 6, '91.

Mr. Byrne Hillard :

DEAR SIR — In answer to your inquiry let me say that I do not see why you might not be able to induce the government rain-makers to turn their attention to the problem which troubles you. If they can produce rain they ought to be able to create at short notice almost any kind of atmosphere desired. Indeed, I think they may have in stock one that might exactly suit the needs of your town.

Yours, etc.,

JULIUS HAW THORNE.

The letter was written with a type-writer, but was redeemed by an autograph signature. Hillard clipped off the name, and, making a little ball of the rest of the letter, he threw it indig-nantly into the fire.

The next was better :

NEW YORK, Dec. 6, '91.

MR. BYRNE HILLARD — If you have the literary taste and talent, the surroundings do not matter so much. If it is in your brain and heart, 'tis better than for your neighbor to have it or for it to be in the atmosphere.

As for your verses, I find some promising lines in them.

Sincerely yours,

E. C. STEADYMAN.

Hillard read this letter a half dozen times at least, and said to himself : " In my opinion, Steadyman is the ablest critic this country has produced."

The next day he got the following :

BOSTON, Dec. 6, '96.

[DICTATED.]

DEAR SIR — I suppose your letter is another autograph-hunting scheme. Not having courage enough to ask for what you want, you try to obtain it by false pretenses.

There was no signature to this, and, as he had several Boston names on his list, he was a little in doubt as to who the writer was.

The next letter from Boston contained the true Bostonic idea, and read :

BOSTON, 9 Dec., —

Byrne Hillard, Esq.:

DEAR SIR—The only remedy I can suggest is for you to move to Boston. Yours, etc.,

T. BALDRICH.

Then the answers quit coming. He was sure that he would get a reply from Mr. Powells, for he had added a few extra lines to the letter which he had sent to the celebrated novelist, in which he paid a compliment to that author's "Fall of Simon Lapsus," "A Choctaw Winter," and "Hazardous Misfortunes."

But Mr. Powells never answered, likewise, Mr. Fawton and Mr. Stockett.

Hillard's attempt to connect himself with the great literary centres by the mail service had not proved to be a brilliant success. He had made a collection of three or four autographs, but he could not notice that they added any

decided literary flavor to the atmosphere of the town. Perhaps it was because he kept them carefully locked up in his desk along with his diploma and other sacred things.

Meanwhile, the ex-governors and the ex-judges, and the ex-honorables, and the big railroad lawyers continued to carry off the law practice.

Hillard finally came to the conclusion that a home-made literary atmosphere would be much better than an imported one anyhow, and that it didn't make a bit of difference whether Powells and the rest of them answered his letters or not. He would proceed at once with his novel, and at the same time would attempt to organize a literary club in the town.

He had no difficulty in getting a dozen women and a half dozen men of education and culture to compose a club, which they called the Lanier Circle, and which met every two weeks. Hillard was elected president of it, and

held the office until — but that's later on.

One of the members of the club was Miss Stover, a most estimable lady, born in Virginia and reared in West Virginia, although she had always lived in the same town, but thirty or thirty-five years only ripen the mind for literary appreciation. Moreover, Miss Stover had an aunt who was supposed to be "connected" with one of the New York magazines.

Miss Stover was elected secretary of the Lanier Circle, attended regularly, and manifested a sympathetic interest in Hillard's effort to replace some of the ordinary West Virginia ozone with a more literary sort.

Very naturally, the first subject discussed was the great need of an organization of this character and the poverty of the place in respect of these things. Miss Stover and two or three other members feared at first that a breath might blow over from Bohemia,

which, of course, would be very shocking, but the decision of the Circle, after mature *délibération*, was that a literary atmosphere did not necessarily imply the odor of cigarettes and cheese sandwiches and an acquaintance with the soiled edges of society.

The Lanier Circle rolled along nicely, and Hillard soon began to find breath suitable for his nostrils. The waiting for his law practice continued good, and at last he began his novel. Of course, the Lanier Circle knew of it, and was full of delight and pride—and suggestions.

Miss Stover hoped he would give it plenty of local color, but there seemed a good deal of uncertainty as to what its complexion would be.

When the first five or six chapters were finished, Hillard read them to the Circle. It lacked "intensity," was the only criticism. There was not ardor and glow enough. There was not feeling enough—not enough "soul-

yearning," as one of the members put it.

But Miss Stover thought that it was "perfectly lovely," adding that she was sure the closing chapters would be less cold.

A week or two later, Hillard received the following mysterious letter:

Office of the WOMAN'S BLOOMER,
NEW YORK, Aug. 4.

Mr. Byrne Hillard:

DEAR SIR—I am sure you will pardon this letter when I tell you that I am much interested in the success of the Lanier Circle, and have kept posted as to its proceedings from the beginning. Its object is a most worthy as well as a most delightful one, and if I can be of any service to the Circle, please do not hesitate to call upon me.

I am especially pleased to hear (you must not ask how I heard it) that you are engaged in a creative literary work, and that it gives promise of such great success.

Having said this much, you will permit me to presume on my age and experience in the literary life to offer a little advice. I am firm in the belief that no great novel or poem can be written by one who has not been deeply moved by the divine passion of love. It is a fundamental law of literature.

There is no escaping it. No exception to this rule worthy of consideration can be pointed out.

Art is not cold. The highest art burns like fire. No author can write of love or life unless he knows what it is—for love and life are one and the same thing.

I am told that your story reveals remarkable talent, but that one thing is lacking.

Think upon what I have said.

Your well-wisher,

(MRS.) ANASTASIA CAROLINE BINNER,
Associate editor *Woman's Bloomer*.

The budding young novelist didn't quite know what to make of this. Who was Mrs. Anastasia Caroline Binner, anyhow? And how did she know anything about him? And so he must either curb his literary ambitions or hunt up a girl and proceed deliberately and with malice aforethought to fall in love with her!

How was he to find her? He might advertise in the town papers, stating his wants and submitting plans and specifications of the sort of girl desired.

And ought he to warn her of the impending disaster when he met her?

How long would it likely take him to fall deeply enough in love so that he could proceed safely with his novel?

And having gotten in once, how was he to get out?

He might stand it, but what was the poor victim to do?

If he took this course of bichloride-of-love treatment for literary coldness, would he have to re-write the first half-dozen chapters of his story, or could he work enough soul-yearning into the last half to make a good average for all?

Perhaps it would depend upon the quantity of the medicine taken.

And while Mrs. Anastasia Caroline Binner was so kind as to prescribe the remedy, free of cost, why didn't she pick out the victim for him while she was at it?

These, and many other questions, occurred to him as he pondered this problem of love and literature.

Suddenly he remembered that once

upon a time he had heard somebody say that Miss Stover had an aunt in New York who was connected with a woman's magazine.

And scales two inches thick fell from his eyes!

"Oh, ho! This literary atmosphere seems to be having its effect," said Hillard, as he threw Mrs. Anastasia Caroline Binner's valuable autograph letter into the waste basket.

Then he went to his desk, took out the manuscript of his story and read it critically, and came to the painful conclusion that the Lanier Circle critics were right.

"But I'm not going to fall in love just for the literary value of it," he said.

"It would be like loving a girl for her money. I'm getting disgusted with this whole business, and guess I'll go up to Dora's and have some music."

And Dora—who was Dora?

She wasn't a member of the Lanier Circle, and wasn't worried at all about

the atmosphere of the place, but she was the prettiest girl in the town and her—but that was enough distinction for one girl, for that old town was blest above the cities of the earth in this particular.

During July and August the Circle suspended operations, and Hillard's manuscript was also allowed to rest undisturbed. He argued with himself that the kind of warmth he would be likely to work into it during the dog days would hardly be the kind advised by Mrs. Anastasia Caroline Binner, associate editor of the *Woman's Bloomer*.

And then lounging on the big broad piazza at Dora's was a much more agreeable occupation.

Miss Stover inquired of him frequently about his novel, and assured him of her great interest in his literary ambitions, but these ambitions remained stuck away in a pigeonhole with the manuscript.

Two miles below the town there is

an island, rich in romance and story. Once it was the scene of a gigantic plot against the government; now its soil of marvelous richness yields treasures of corn and wheat, and, in the balmy summer nights, men and maidens dance and swing and make love under the great oaks that grow by the water's edge. Art has not builded there gravel walks nor luxuriant summer houses, but the green willows wave a welcome to the sun-scorched city and the tall sycamores invite to swing from their leopard branches.

Of the famous old mansion which long years ago was presided over by a mistress of celebrated beauty and culture, there remain only a few foundation stones, some pieces of furniture, and the deep old well, over which it is said, if troth be plighted, fortune and happiness will follow.

When the Lanier Circle began to revolve again in September, it had its first meeting on this island, and cele-

brated the event by inviting a number of outsiders and making it a social affair. There was dancing in the pavilion, swinging and bowling.

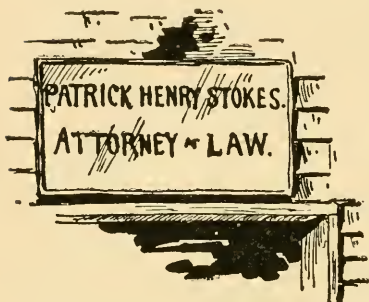
Hillard and Dora strolled over towards the old well, and were gone so long that the literary feature of the outing was delayed.

When they returned to the pavilion Hillard directed the programme in a distracted manner, and when it was finished he announced to the Circle his resignation as its president, giving as his reason that he intended to begin at once the earnest practice of the law, giving it henceforth his entire time and attention, adding that his success in his first suit, during the recent term of court, had encouraged him to drop everything else.

And there was but one person on the island who knew that he had ever had a suit, and she blushed the color of the sun which at that moment was going down beyond the Ohio hills.

HIS LAST CAMPAIGN

I TAKE great pleasure in introducing to you the only real, live genius I



ever knew. And he is dead. When he died he had the largest funeral ever given to a private citizen in the Virginias.

His age was anywhere from sixty to one hundred and ten, and those who had known him for a generation said he had never been any younger. He certainly never got any older. In his earlier days he had pretended to preach. In his later days he had pretended to practice at the law. He was always pretending to run for office. But he never really

preached, or practiced law, or held an office—and his name was Uncle Billy Stokes.

Uncle Billy was the great original Office Seeker. There was never known to be a convention of either party in his county at which he did not offer himself as a candidate for some office. He always nominated himself, dwelling at length upon his imagined public services and his peculiar fitness for the particular office to which he aspired at that particular time. If the office required a knowledge of the law he would say :

“MY FELLOW CITIZENS—It does not become me to speak of my own superior attainments, and I need only remind you that I attended the Harvard Law School (he really never read a law book in his life) they know everything there, they told it to me and I remembered it.”

If the office required executive ability, he would ask them to recall his firm and brilliant administration of the affairs of state when he “had the

honor to be governor of the commonwealth."

If the particular office to which Uncle Billy aspired was a legislative one, he would button his old long coat about him, mount the platform, and begin by saying:

"MY COUNTRYMEN — When your humble servant and John Randolph had the honor of representing this great commonwealth in the Senate of the United States," etc.

Everybody humored the old man, and a speech by him was a fixed feature of every political convention held in the town of M— for many years. Some of his old friends usually gave him two or three complimentary votes in convention, which pleased him greatly, and he would talk of the "enthusiastic support," which invariably came to him and of the faithfulness and firmness with which his friends stood by him "regardless of party."

When there were no conventions to attend in his own county, he would

often visit an adjoining county, and deliver the same speeches there. And he was always a welcome visitor, for he was so unique and so pompous with his long-tailed coat and his old silk hat of the vintage of a former generation. And so it came about that Uncle Billy Stokes, the Office Seeker, was the best known man in that part of the State.

On one occasion, at a county convention, he created something of a sensation by announcing that he had decided not to be a candidate for sheriff at that time although, he said, he knew that the office was easily within his reach, because, he said, "My old friend Colonel Howe is a candidate, and as he was my efficient clerk when I was judge of this circuit many years ago, I will not stand in his way. I yield to the demands of my higher nature and withdraw in favor of my old and faithful friend, Colonel Howe." And when Howe was nominated Uncle

Billy was sure that his own magnanimity had made it possible.

The opposing party held their convention on the following Saturday, and our old friend was there, of course. When nominations for the office of sheriff were called for, he took the platform by the side of the chairman, and begged leave to announce that he had decided to decline to run, for the reason that his old friend, Judge Wilson, with whom he had served in Congress so many years, and with such close and pleasant relations, was a candidate. He therefore hoped that it would be the pleasure of the convention to nominate Judge Wilson, and that both he and Colonel Howe might be elected. It so happened, however, that neither had that honor, for the Populists run in a candidate and beat both Wilson and Howe.

These were the only two occasions on which he ever "declined to run." On all others he was a candidate, and

was always satisfied with the two or three votes which he was certain to receive.

Uncle Billy had his political headquarters, too, like all great statesmen, all the year round, where he planned his campaigns, and from which he sent out orders to his lieutenants. These headquarters were on a well-whittled store-box in a dingy little general store across the street from the courthouse, and in Chancery Row, so called because two lawyers besides Uncle Billy had their offices there. I say besides Uncle Billy, for he had a sign out over the side door of the store which read :

PATRICK HENRY STOKES,
ATTORNEY-AT-LAW.

Although, as I have said, he had never read a law book, and, of course, had never been admitted to the bar. Nobody knew whether his name was really Patrick Henry or William, but

he always called himself the former, and everybody else always called him Uncle Billy.

This old store-box was the scene of many an interesting event in the political and social life of the village. Here



Judge B—,
Col. McG—,
Dr. K—, and
other choice
spirits met
nightly in the
winter time

to play dominoes, and talk politics with one another and with Uncle Billy, who was the best spider player of them all, and who was permitted also by common consent to pass final judgment on all questions of political issue. Here it was, as I have said, that he organized his political campaigns. As soon as one election was over he began to get ready for the next. He would say to his friends about him, from his seat on the store-

box, while the game of dominoes progressed:

“MY FRIENDS — And I am happy to call you all my friends — I have been approached by a number of prominent gentlemen to-day, regardless of party, and solicited to permit my name to be used two years from now as a candidate for the legislature, and whilst I appreciate the compliment I have said to them that whilst I have no political aspirations or ambitions, I am in the hands of my friends, and would not refuse the call of my countrymen to serve them. I do not think it becoming in one who has been so often honored with the trust and confidence of his fellow citizens to refuse to obey when duty calls, but I have said to all my friends to-day that such a nomination must come wholly unsolicited upon my part. A gentleman of my standing and services to his country could not, of course, consent to become a candidate in the vulgar sense for any office in the gift of the people. At the earnest solicitation, therefore, of many friends, representing all parties, I have reluctantly given my partial consent to represent this county in the legislature two years hence.”

Then everybody would stop playing dominoes long enough to pledge him his support.

Thus his campaign for the legisla-

ture would be inaugurated, but it was more than likely that before a week had passed Uncle Billy would forget that he was getting ready to run for the house of delegates, and would announce to his assembled friends about the store-box that he was in receipt of numerous letters from all parts of the state urging him to accept the nomination for governor, which he had very reluctantly, and much against his inclination, consented to do.

And everybody would stop playing dominoes and crowd around him with the usual pledges of support.

One evening Uncle Billy went as usual to the store to resume his dominoes, and his political discussions with his friends Judge B—, Col. McG—, Dr. K—, and the rest. The store was closed, and the proprietor could not be found. He had gone out of town, and had taken the key with him. He had not been courteous enough to leave even an excuse or an apology. Uncle

Billy was righteously indignant. Such an outrage on the rights of the people had never been committed or dreamed of in the village. The audacity of the act lay in the fact that the owner of the store was also the mayor of the village, and his closing the store for one whole evening, without their knowledge or consent, was considered by all of the domino-politicians, and especially Uncle Billy, as an act of tyranny which could not be endured in silence. Some practical jokers fed the fires of Uncle Billy's wrath with incendiary remarks, and proposed that an indignation meeting of the citizens of M—be called at once. Some small boys caught up the idea, and, with Uncle Billy's approval, they ran to the old courthouse and began ringing the bell.

Now, the ringing of the courthouse bell was a most significant and important event in that town, and in ten minutes half the population at least had assembled at the square to see



what the matter was. The practical jokers from about the foot of the store-box throne of the Office Seeker were mixed in the crowd, one of them with a string of resolutions in his pocket hastily scribbled down. Uncle Billy called the house to order, and made a speech in which he told the people that their liberties were threatened, and their rights were being trampled under the feet of tyrants. The storekeeper-mayor was compared to Cæsar, George III., Nero, Caligula, the Czar of all the Russias, and the rest of the tyrants of history. "When I had the honor to be mayor of this town," said the speaker, "every citizen had his inalienable rights sacredly preserved, and I can see in the faces before me a call to again assume the duties of that high and responsible office."

When he sat down, the joker, with his resolutions in his pocket, pulled them out, and read them and moved that they be adopted. They resolved

that the country was rapidly drifting in a merciless current towards Cæsarism, and expressed the opinion that the beheading of tyrants was the chief end of man.

The crowd saw the joke, and adopted the bloody resolutions unanimously. It was a proud hour for Uncle Billy, and one to which he often referred, but the next evening he took his place as usual on the store-box, and announced to his friends, the mayor included, that he had yielded to the demands of this crisis in the history of the town, and had consented to allow himself to be elected mayor at the next election.

It was about a year after this episode that the Office Seeker made his last campaign. He had not been able to occupy his accustomed place in the grocery with the regularity of former times, but the game of dominoes went on, and, whenever he was able to be present, the "boys" showed him

unusual attention, for they all liked the half-witted, kind-hearted old man and humored his every wish. He had announced to his own select circle, as usual, that he had yielded to the earnest solicitations of his friends, and had consented to run for the legislature.

Then the Domino Club laid a scheme. They determined to humor the poor old fellow by securing his nomination. The nominating convention was to be a mass meeting of voters, and the Domino Club went forth quietly and visited every neighborhood in the county, telling their friends confidentially that they simply wanted to give Uncle Billy enough complimentary votes in convention to please his vanity, as it was not probable that the old man would be able to attend many more conventions.

When convention day came the old courthouse was crowded. The first order of business, after appointing the usual committees, was the nomination

of a candidate for the house of delegates. The name of a young lawyer was presented by a country school teacher, in an eloquent speech, and then Uncle Billy went tottering up to the platform. His long coat was out at the elbows more than usual and fringed at the bottom, and his voice was thin and cracked, but he was as erect as any man in the house. He made the same little speech which he had made so many times on like occasions, alluding to his great public services and the demand of the people that he consent to take up the burden of office once more.

Judge B— and Col. McG— both spoke in his behalf, and when the ballots were counted, everybody except the Domino Club, was amazed to hear the chairman announce that William Stokes was the nominee of the Democratic party for the house of delegates for the county of ——. No, not everybody—Uncle Billy him-

self seemed to take it as a matter of course. He thanked the convention, and assured them that Patrick Henry Stokes would never betray the high trust imposed.

That night he held a reception about his political throne on the old store-box in Chancery Row, and told marvelous stories of his public services as governor, judge, senator, and legislator—stories woven out of a disordered mind, but patiently heard by pitying friends.

He was not present at his usual place the next night, nor the next, and his old friends hunted him up in his miserable quarters and found him unable to leave his bed. They gave him every attention, and he lingered for several weeks, talking constantly of what he would do for the people of his county and commonwealth when he got back to the legislature.

For the last day or two he lay unconscious, but on the evening when he

stepped across the river, which for him had narrowed down to a thread, they heard him say :

“Mr. Speaker, when last I had the honor to represent my county in this body”—and the old Office Seeker slept.

His funeral was the largest ever seen in that part of the State. The courthouse bell was tolled, the Domino Club acted as pall bearers for their old friend, and a stone was erected above his grave by public subscription. The other day, in strolling through the little cemetery at M—, I found it, and read thereon these words :

UNCLE BILLY,
HE HAS MADE HIS LAST CAMPAIGN.



A TALE OF FOURTH STREET

FOURTH street is Cincinnati's stylish promenade. Nowhere are there su-



perber women or smarter turnouts. The wealth of Clifton and the elegance of Walnut Hills may be seen there any bright afternoon. The thorough gentleman feels like walking hat in hand from Main street to Elm. But these fine

ladies would not notice him if he did, for the glorious shops are on Fourth street.

A few years ago a lad left his hard and barren home in the Big Sandy

country and found his way to the Queen City. He was upon no errand, and he had no definite object in view, but he felt that there must be better things in the world than this starved life of the hills. But his ideas were very vague and uncertain. Books had not been his, and the tender touches of culture were not felt in his home. But he knew that it could not be so everywhere. There could not be so much beauty in river and hill and sun and sky and none in human life. So with the next timber rise he went with the raftsmen, and by and by found himself in the great city. It was night. The splendor of the lights, the shops and the throngs dazzled him. For half the night he tramped the streets, lost in wonder. It was a new world to him. He stood at the base of the Cathedral and watched it rise above him like one of his own hills crowned with a giant poplar shorn of its limbs. He heard the music from

the concert halls. He saw the great folks drive by in their carriages home from the theaters. Then he went back down to the river's edge, and slept with the raftsmen till morning. His companions left him, returning to their homes and to the life in the Big Sandy country with which they were full content, but he was not lonesome. Even the odors from the gutters were sweet to him. In the wild intoxication of these new scenes he felt that even the granite pavements and the great stone buildings were his companions, and these fine ladies on Fourth street his friends. For was he not walking the same street with them? Was he not almost touching their soft garments? Was he not enveloped with the perfume that blew from their lace handkerchiefs? Was he not in the very shadow of their white parasols? Could he not hear their voices—voices such as he had supposed were to be heard only in dreams—voices sweeter

than the thrush-song, to which he had listened many a morning long? And could he not feast his eyes on them until he was drunk with delight?

Surely they would not care, for they would not notice him, they would not even see him.

It was something more than the completely satisfying of his great and untutored love for the beautiful. He felt for the first time in his life the benediction that falls from a beautiful woman's face.

Thus for days this lad from the mountains was the happiest being in all the city. He did not see the rag-pickers and the beggars. He ate and slept among rough men down by the river, but he cared not for them, and it cost but little.

At the end of a week he discovered, however, that the little money he had saved, with which to see the world, was nearly all gone. Then he began to look for work.

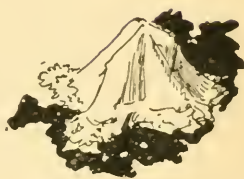
The granite pavements and the great stone buildings did not seem to be his companions now, and the fine ladies on Fourth street were not his friends. He did not notice the perfumes from their lace handkerchiefs, and, when their soft gowns brushed by, they seemed to sweep him off the street. He realized that he had not a friend in the city, where six days before everybody and everything were his friends. He asked for work street by street, and from shop to shop. His feet were sore and his heart was sick. He tried the gardens in the suburbs and the great stores in the city. Nobody wanted him. There was nothing that he could do. He thought of going back to his old life among the hills, but he would rather die than do that, so he searched on.

One day, tired out with fruitless search, he leaned against a post on Fourth street, wondering what to do next. The day was fair and the

street was thronged. He felt now that he hated all of these fine people, and his hatred grew bitter and desperate. What right had they to be so happy? Was the world made for them alone? Was there no room in all this big town for him?

Two ladies passed by. One of them dropped her handkerchief. He picked it up, ran after her, and handed it to her. She smiled and thanked him. And such a smile! He had never seen anything so sweet before, and her voice was something to remember. When she turned to thank him, he saw a face fairer than the flowers that grew by the brook on the mountain side, and he was almost sure that her gloved fingers touched his great rough hand as she took the dainty bit of lace. She did not know that she had touched his coarse hand, but it thrilled him with a strange delight.

Then he said to himself: "No,



I will not go back to the hills; I would rather die here than to do that."

Again he tramped the streets in search of work—anything that rough but willing hands could do, but every day he went back to Fourth street, and eagerly scanned the faces that crowded by him. She was not among them. The hope of seeing that face again had given him strength to continue his hunt for a place where he might earn enough to pay for his miserable lodgings.

Once he saw her step into a carriage driven by a stiff coachman, and watched them go down the street and become lost in the crowd.

This was enough to nerve him for another week's search, and, at the end of it, he had succeeded in getting a place with an old man who kept a curious junkshop down at the west end of Fifth street. Meanwhile he had gone every day to his favorite

spot at Race and Fourth, and watched and waited for the one face in the world which any longer had any attraction for him. The other fine ladies were now as unnoticed by him as he was by them. Once he thought he saw her coming, but a policeman made him get away from the corner and he lost sight of her.

For the last three days of his search for employment he had had but one meal, and had slept at night on the ground in a little corner down by the river.

It was Saturday morning when he was to begin working for the old man with the curious junkshop down on Fifth street, and, exhausted and starved though he was, he was happy in the thought that at last his unceasing search had resulted in something.

It had indeed resulted in more than he thought. When he tried to rise from his earthen bed he found himself too weak to do so. He was no longer

hungry, but his head was burning, and the earth on which he lay seemed to hold him down. The hot sun came down upon him, but it burned less than the fever that had seized him. It was late in the afternoon before he was discovered and taken to a hospital. By the next evening he was delirious.

Nobody knew who he was nor where his home. They only knew that when the fever was raging he would say:

"I wonder why she never comes any more. I have been here every day, and she has not gone by. Is there no room for me on this sidewalk? May I not stand here and wait? Maybe she will come."

Then he grew worse and weaker, and the last they heard him say was:

"Stand aside! She is coming now!"

And they buried him in the potters-field.

THE STORY
OF AN OIL STRIKE

"I WILL give you a one-eighth royalty for a five-years' lease of your twenty-acre lot," said the agent to old man Richards — John Richards — whose little patch of land was supposed to be within the oil belt.

The oil excitement which had struck the neighborhood was about of the usual virulence. Everybody expected to become wealthy enough within the next twelve months to own a railroad, and within the next two years to be able to run for office.

To be sure, there were no producing wells nearer than fifteen miles away, but it was easy enough for anybody to

see that his own farm was directly on the forty-five degree line. Anybody who could draw a straight line could see that much.

But John Richards couldn't draw a straight line, and didn't seem likely to take the oil fever with which his neighbors were all afflicted.

"No," he said to the agent, "I won't lease the place. I don't care whether you strike oil or not. What good would it do me? Suppose I should get fifty thousand dollars out of the lot, what good would it do me? There's nobody living that I care for or that cares for me. No, the oil may stay down in the ground where it belongs."

For at least forty years—nobody seemed to know how long—John Richards had lived almost the life of a hermit, and he was now seventy years of age. He had come out to this neighborhood in West Virginia, bought the twenty-acre lot, and had made neither friends nor enemies. He lived alone,

did his own cooking, and attended strictly to his own business.

Of course, there had been all sorts of rumors about him. One said that he had come from Philadelphia, where a newly-made grave held the fair form of his young wife. Another said that he had stolen a horse, or a bank, or something. Several good people of the neighborhood took an interest in him when he came, and tried to find out why he had settled among them to lead the life of a recluse, but their researches and investigations were not rewarded with success.

He told them he thought that he was able, perhaps, to manage his own affairs, including the little cabin and the twenty-acre lot, without assistance from outside sources. And so, for forty years, he had lived alone, without any apparent interest in anybody or anything and without any known object except mere existence.

The oil excitement grew in intensity

as the wells came nearer to the neighborhood in which John Richards lived; but he paid no attention to it, except to refuse all offers to lease or buy his twenty-acre lot.

One day a derrick was erected on the edge of a lot adjoining his, and pretty soon the "bird of the walking-beam," so familiar to oil operators, began to sing its monotonous song. As the drill went down the excitement went up, for only a short distance away men who, a year before, were not worth a dollar, now had an income of fifty or a hundred dollars a day.

The strata were carefully examined, and a log-book of the well was kept by a geologist—Prof. W.—who had located the well, and who was expecting it to extend the territory. At last the third sand was reached, and the well was "shot." It proved to be a genuine "gusher," making seven hundred barrels in twenty-four hours.

Once more the principal operator visited John Richards. This time he offered him twenty thousand dollars for his twenty acres. Still he refused, and everybody said he was an old fool.

The chief oil magnate of the field, the one who had tried so hard to buy out old man Richards, was Fleming R. McDonald, known as Col. McDonald, probably because he had been chief marshal of a political parade in his native town during the Hayes-Tilden campaign. Many an innocent man is given a military title for a less offense, and compelled by a pitiless public to wear it through life like a millstone about his neck.

Col. McDonald had come out to the oil field from New York state, and had brought his family of three daughters with him. He had been very fortunate and had made a good deal of money. Like all oil men, he lived like a king, and his daughters like the

daughters of a king, with their horses and carriages and their guests from the city for weeks at a time.

Col. McDonald had promised his daughters that if they would come out and make him a home while he made a fortune, they should have everything that money could buy, and he kept his word.

His ambition was to get control of the entire field, and, enraged at Richards' refusal to sell or lease his lot, which was in the very heart of the productive territory, he determined to drive the old man out. He had not been accustomed to being refused, and he was not going to allow a crazy old hermit to stand in his way now in the day of his prosperity.

He threatened him and cursed him; he hired boys to stone his cabin by night and taunt him by day with being a fool for not leasing or selling his land. He turned the course of a stream, so that it would run over the old man's

lot and destroy his garden. He permitted a great pool of stagnant water to stand and grow green and fester in the sun on his own land not five rods from the hermit's cabin.

It was said, and generally believed, that he even offered a big reward to anyone who would fasten the door on the outside and set fire to the cabin while the old man was asleep, but there was none fiendish enough to take his gold for the old man's blood.

Finding that by none of these means could he drive the hermit away, he hired a pettifogging lawyer to get up papers showing that Richards had never obtained a clear title to the land, and that it really belonged to the survey which McDonald had bought. The papers were prepared, and the oil king at last felt sure of getting possession of the coveted prize, but fortunately an honest court saw through the scheme and refused to be a party to it.

At last, after the most desperate efforts had all failed, McDonald gave up hope of getting possession of the old man's land while its owner lived, but his chagrin and anger showed themselves in a constant persecution of Richards, hoping the while that the old man would not live much longer to be in his way.

But this oil field was like all others, and by-and-by the collapse came. After the excitement began to cool off, and people began to get a business breath, it was found that while there had been a great many productive wells, there were a great many more dry holes, and that, for the past year or two, Col. McDonald had been investing almost exclusively in the latter.

Becoming desperate, he began "wild-catting," that is, putting down wells in territory far from any producing wells, and the more money he lost the more reckless and desperate he became, until he was financially ruined.

An old habit of drink had been indulged, and, when ruin came, he was not in condition to meet it bravely; but he succeeded in keeping his daughters in ignorance of his losses until one morning he was found in the stables among his horses with a bullet hole in his head and a revolver lying by his right hand.

Broken-hearted, in poverty, and virtually alone in the world, fallen from luxury to pinching penury, crushed to the earth by their father's awful death, the daughters of the late oil king saw all of their possessions sold until they had left to them only the grave of a suicide father.

And John Richards, what had he to do with all this? Nothing, except that he surprised everybody one day, soon after the true condition of the late Col. McDonald's affairs was known, by going to a driller and contracting for the immediate drilling of a well on his twenty-acre lot. He had caught

the oil fever after everybody else had had it, and everybody said: "I told you so. I knew he'd come to it at last. But what an old fool he was for not taking that twenty thousand dollars which Col. McDonald offered him. I suppose the old miser has enough money stuck away somewhere to sink a dozen wells."

But John Richards heard none of this, and would not have cared if he had heard it. His thoughts were entirely taken up with his well. He took more interest in it than he had shown in anything before for forty years. Every day the old man, with his long white hair, could be seen watching the progress of the bit as it bored its way into the earth. He even became communicative, and, as there began to appear favorable signs of the right kind and quantity of sand, his face would light up and he would hobble around and talk about his good luck.

When the oil sand was pierced, and the oil spouted over the derrick, he fairly danced for joy, and his old wrinkled face seemed to lose its wrinkles and to beam with delight.

It proved to be the best well in the county, and before sundown the old man was offered once more a big sum of money for his little patch of ground. But he replied: "Come around in the morning."

The next day the men who had made him the offer went to his cabin, but it was empty. A note, written with a trembling hand, was found lying on the bare table in the corner. It read:

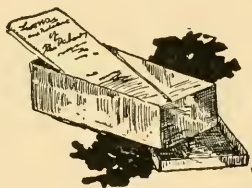
"I am going away and will not return. Look under the last plank in the floor.

JOHN RICHARDS."

They lifted the loose board, and, in an old tin box, they found a piece of paper, the last will and testament, properly witnessed, of John Richards,

written with his own hand an hour after he had struck the big well.

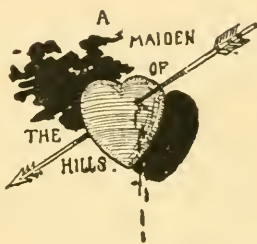
The old man had bequeathed his twenty-acre lot to the penniless daughters of his old enemy and persecutor.



A MAIDEN OF THE HILLS

It was the proudest day of her life—and the saddest.

He was to be graduated that day at the University, and she had neither gown nor gloves to wear.



He was her brother.

It had taken every dollar that he could earn, that his sacrificing sister could save, and that the father and mother could get together, to put him through college.

The day he was graduated the father, the mother, and the sister were not there. The father had said:

“Go, daughter, I will try to find money to pay your fare.”

But she had replied: “No; I cannot look fine like the sisters of his

classmates. I will not go and disgrace him."

And she stayed at home, and her tears were sweet with sacrifice.

[That day a great lady wept bitter tears of disappointment, over a gown for which she had paid \$500, because the train was not long enough.]

II.

The next summer her brother went home to spend a week, and took with him a classmate. They had been employed together in a surveying corps.

The week soon became a month—two months.

His friend was handsome, thoughtless, dashing.

When he went away he said to her: "These little flirtations are forgotten in a week. Good-bye."

And the heart of this maiden of the hills—ah, me!

[That day a great lady cast aside, as a trifle, a heart that had been laid at her feet.]

THE ARTIST'S STORY

"GIVE me a subject for a picture and I will give you a subject for a story," said Feemer to me one night as we sat with our feet on my writing table, and filled the room with smoke.

Feemer was a young fellow who had gone to Italy from somewhere in Virginia, Page county, I think, and, after three years of hard work in Florence and a few months in Paris, had opened a studio in Cincinnati. He had inherited considerable artistic instinct and talent from his father, who was a sculptor of wide reputation, and whose beautiful marbles adorn many public and private



~~scribbled out text~~
Hi, Bago.

galleries. Young Feemer wanted to become a great painter, and he was modest enough to admit that several years might intervene before he could lay claim to such distinction.

"Paint me a picture of the prettiest girl in the world," I replied banteringly to his proposition.

He got up, walked slowly back and forth across the room two or three times, and said:

"I can't do it, but I'll try; and some day I'll give you a subject for a story."

I forgot all about the incident until three or four months afterwards, when I received a little portrait with Harry Feemer's familiar signature in the corner, accompanied by a note, which said, simply: "This is the best that I can do."

The portrait was that of a girl, certainly not over eighteen or nineteen years of age, with wonderful brown eyes and russet hair. As a bit of art it was so far superior to anything

Feemer had done before, that I at first doubted if he had painted it, but upon reflection, I knew that he was too honest to try to deceive, and so I attributed the excellence of the work to the inspiration of the subject. I liked it and told him so, but he would not talk about it.



Shortly afterwards I went East, and Feemer and I lost sight of each other. That was several years ago.

Last week I threw my work into the corner and ran down into the beautiful valley about Luray for a vacation of ten days. Foolish are they who wear themselves out pretending to seek rest at the crowded seashore places, when a peace that passeth understanding and a joy that may not be told of in books, await the tired soul that, led by some good spirit, wanders into the beautiful country of the Shenandoah and the

valley of Luray. In these autumn days the beggar here is richer than the Fifth avenue plutocrat. The old worm fences wind and struggle up the hillside, broken here and there—winding and struggling and broken, but still climbing, like life itself. And these old silent lanes that invite to wander on and forget the office and the shop. And these cool caves in the limestone hills—caverns more beautiful than the palace of a king, resting places in the bosom of old mother earth.

To this peaceful spot I came, as I had often come before, and if the busy world still went on its way, I neither knew nor cared.

One day I was invited to join a party to visit the Luray cavern, and gladly went, although I had often wandered through its marvelous halls and pillared chambers. In the party was a young lady, whose name I did not learn at first, but who I knew was a

resident of the neighborhood. I was sure that I had seen her before; certainly I could not be mistaken; and my curiosity soon found me a way to a conversation with her.

"I used to know a young fellow from this vicinity," I said, "by the name of Feemer—Harry Feemer—an artist"—

But I did not finish the sentence, for I was as much surprised at what I had discovered, as she had been at what I had said. This young woman, whom I was so sure I had seen before, was the original of the little portrait which Harry Feemer had painted for me many years before in Cincinnati, and had said in sending it to me: "This is the best that I can do." There were the same wonderful brown eyes and russet hair.

She seemed greatly disturbed, and I saw that I had blundered, but she said:

"Yes, he used to live here, but went away several years ago, and has never been back but once or twice."

"Do you know where he is now?" I ventured to ask.

"I— I—, pardon me," she said, turning her face from me, and the very height and depth of sorrow seemed to me to be measured in that "pardon me."

I had become much interested by this time, for I was anxious to know what had become of my old friend, and was determined to work out this mystery.

That afternoon, while strolling up the mountain with an old friend, I said to him: "Tell me about Harry Feemer. You certainly know what has become of him."

"If you will walk with me up this old turnpike leading from Rappahannock to the Luray valley, I will tell you."

We walked on slowly, and I waited for my friend to begin, but he was silent. On and on we tramped up the old pike on the side of the Blue Ridge. At last he said:

"Harry was a noble fellow, and I think he had great ability. I am sure no artist was ever truer to his ideal. Poor fellow!"

"Yes," I said, impatiently, "but where is he? What has become of him?"

"It's a peculiar story. Listen: You remember the young lady to whom you were talking about him this morning in our cave party. Well, he worshipped that girl. He cared for only two things in the world: that girl and his art, and a good deal of his painting consisted of portraits of her. His studio was full of her pictures, little and big. You knew him in Cincinnati, I believe. Well, after staying there a year or two, he returned to Paris to continue his studies, and, of course, he stopped here a little while to see his relatives and old friends before sailing. In his Paris studio his walls and easels were filled with portraits of his Virginia sweetheart. One day a fellow student came in, and, seeing so many

portraits of the same person, inquired who was the original. Feemer replied, 'The prettiest girl in the world.'

"The other student, who was a Frenchman named Ribot, shrugged his shoulders and said sneeringly:

"'Where did you pick up your prize beauty? Some little grisette, I suppose, who needs all the paint you have given her. I wonder if she would come to my *atelier*.'

"Ribot had hardly finished when Feemer knocked him down.

"'Oh, you want to fight for your model, do you! Well, you must fight like a gentleman,' hissed Ribot.

"The next morning at sunrise there was a duel in the Bois de Boulogne. Before going to the field, Feemer wrote home to her, at whom the insult had been thrown by the thoughtless Frenchman, telling her that for nothing else in the world would he fight a duel, but that he could never bear to look upon her picture again, if he did



not resent the insult to it and to her.

"The duel took place next day," continued my friend as we crossed over from the turnpike into a rough-stone enclosure, on the very summit of the Blue Ridge, "and here he lies, and he would rather be here than alive with that insult to her picture unavenged."

The mountain winds stole out from the forest and crept among the tall grave-grass, then howled down the hillside and away, as I stood by Feemer's grave and recalled the night many years ago, when he promised to give me a subject for a story.

He had kept his word.

IN THE RUE ROYALE



WHEN you step across Canal street in New Orleans you cross over from America to Southern Europe. All rawness and rush are left on the other side of the Clay statue. The old Creole quarter—there is nothing like it in any other American city, and its most picturesque street is the Rue Royale. From Conti street to Esplanade it is the delight of the painter, the poet, the romancer, and collector of rare old odds and ends. He who has taken time to let his spirit loaf and laze in true companionship with the soul of the place can never quite forget it.

The Rue Royale—I was its devoted lover for two weeks, and the old flame comes back again now and then like a breath from the rose-hidden gallery of la belle Creole.

The March mornings were balmy and beautiful, and a romance seemed to be woven about every cypress-covered dormer window and every little wrought-iron gallery. The ghosts of Madame Délicieuse and Sieur George haunted the place, and memories of the good Père Antoine lingered in the air. Still “like an aged beggar fallen asleep,” the residence of Madame Delphine squatted down beside the banquette, and from the site of the old Cafés des Réfugiés came a *chanson créole* as plaintive as the story of 'Tite Poulette, and as sweet as the song of the mocking bird that swung itself in the top of a date palm in a courtyard near the Rue Saint Pierre.

Every day I dropped into a dingy old bookstore with crumbling walls

of stuccoed brick, one-storied and musty.

The only cheery thing about the place was a bit of chansonette that came floating in from the lips of a girl hid behind the vines on the gallery across the narrow street.



Every day I found an old man, gray and wrinkled, sitting like a mourner in this burial place of books holding an old volume in his lap. He handled it as gently and as lovingly as if it were the most fragile thing in the world. I noticed that he never seemed to be reading, although he slowly turned the leaves, and every touch was a caress.

He was blind.

The keeper of the store told me that this old man with the sightless eyes and gray beard had come to his place every day for years, stayed an hour, and then had gone out without saying a word, and felt his way with his stick down the street.

I noticed how the old man's face lighted up as he took the same book down from the shelf every day, and how, each day, when he put it back in its place, he seemed to give it a farewell caress.

The keeper of the store, after I had purchased "*Souvenirs D'Amérique et de France, Par Une Créole,*" and Charles Gayarre's "*Louisiana,*" to put him in a good humor, told me this story of the old man and the book:

"He came to New Orleans from the province of Savoie, France, when a young man and became a college professor. He was a great student. Young, brilliant, and ambitious, he gave himself up entirely to his books. The result was that he not only lost his eyesight but also impaired his mind. He was compelled to give up his place in the college. His library and furniture were sold a year or two later by his landlord, but some of his old friends have seen

that he has attention and enough to live on.

“One day directly after the landlord had sold his books he came into my place in the most excited manner, and, with an expression on his face of mingled hope and despair, asked me if I had seen his sweetheart. I did not know what he meant, but tried to calm him. He went to the shelves and run his hand over the books. At last in delight he exclaimed, ‘Here it is! Here it is!’ and, taking down the book, he kissed it again and again and pressed it to his heart as tears of joy filled his sightless eyes. The book was one, as I afterwards learned, which had belonged to him, and the same which you have seen him hold in his lap every day.

“I told him to take it home with him and keep it, but he refused, and no amount of persuasion on my part could induce him to take it. From that hour to this he has come here every day and spent an hour caressing that old book,

which in his madness he calls his sweetheart. No lover could be more constant, none more devoted, none more tender. If I were to sell that book it would break his heart. Only yesterday I asked him again if he did not want to take it home with him, and he said: 'It would be lonesome there. I must not be selfish and take it from its companions. I must wait.'



"And so he waits. But he is a tottering shadow; he will not have long to wait, and, when they lay him away out yonder in the old St. Louis Cemetery, I shall see that his hands are crossed on that old book."

What is the name of the book? I inquired.

"It is Haslam's *Observations on Madness and Melancholy*."

MARTHA

“Tell me a tale, heroic and sublime,
Of love and life and fields where heroes fell—
A tale full fit for this stupendous time,
That I may it to future ages tell.”

Thus spoke I once to one who came from o’er
The ragged hills and sat beside my door.

“If thou wilt go with me,” he said, “I’ll lead thee
where
Life’s greatest tragedy has grown so old
It seems as common as the common air—
So wonted that none thinks it need be told.”

And far across the hills he led away,
And all the sky and all the fields were gray.

At length he stopped beside a cabin door,
Amid the rocks and hills of barren clay,
Where children crept upon the naked floor
And women toiled like slaves through all the
day.

“Behold,” he said, “the story—writ in tears,
And starved and dwarfed lives through years and
years!”

There is nothing whatever of interest in the following story, because Martha was only a poor girl of the hills, and never had either good society or a good gown.

Her home—you have seen it often if you have taken time to look as you followed the covey of Virginia quail—was between two hills where nature had spilt an unusual quantity of sunshine, and where all sorts of wild flowers came up and blossomed, because so few human beings were there to make them afraid. They did not know, perhaps, that Martha was only a poor mountain girl, or they might have shunned her society ; as it was, they knew no better than to love her, and she loved them in return, even to the tiniest bud of them.



She came up and grew in the sun as they did ; toiled between the corn rows, bound the wheat sheaves, and raked the

hay on the hillside when the sun was blistering.

Necessity: This is the word that is written on every page of the life of the hills.

She had heard twice or thrice, far, far away, an echo like that of music and laughter and the tripping of slippered feet, and she had seen twice or thrice, far, far away, faint gleams from the windows of houses where there were the gifts of luxury—she had heard and seen these things in her dreams as she lay with her face to the open window and the stars. For even a poor girl of the hills may dream when the shadows fall, so she but toil while the daylight last.

The little field where they planted and ploughed and harvested the corn—you have seen her there as you rode by to the Springs, and you have noticed how consecration to duty can beautify everything it touches. But you did not have time to stop at the little

house which Martha called her home. Perhaps you did not care to ; you were in a hurry to get on to the Springs to boil out the rheumatism and gout which high living had planted in your system. Martha and the rest of the family—there were nine or ten of them—had no need to go to the Springs. The evil effects of high living did not trouble them. Even the barren life of the hills has its compensations.

One day an old man with a gray beard and a high hat, who was devoting his life to what he called a ministry of education, went that way and saw the girl's bright face in the berry field and gave her two or three books, the first she had ever had except an old speller and a reader or two that had done service for the whole family.

She did not return home that day until dark. Her bucket was only half filled, and her father scolded her for wasting her time. But it was one of the great events in Martha's life, for

things are great or small only by comparison.

Another great event was when she made a visit of four days with some cousins across the big hill a few miles away. The fixing up of an old hat, the making of a new calico dress especially for the occasion, the putting on of a bit of bright new ribbon—these things were discussed in the family circle for days before the visit.

Of course, it was very wrong for her to be so much interested in her appearance. Such things should be left to fine ladies, but there was no one to tell her all this. She may even have dared to think the bit of bright ribbon quite becoming, though certainly she had no right to think so, being, as I have said, only a poor, ignorant girl of the hills. It was doubtless that touch of nature which makes all femininity kin, though they will not all admit the kinship.

At her cousin's house she met two young men who were spending a fort-

night hunting in that neighborhood, and one of them, Arthur Shore, was much attracted by her simple beauty. Being far from home, he thought it entirely safe to say sweet things to her, and, as he was on a hunting expedition, he was quite willing to capture any game in his power. She was no more to him than a covey of partridges or a fine young deer, but it was an easy matter to make her believe otherwise.

After her return home, he and his companion crossed the hill also and soon made a friend of her father, who was himself a lover of a gun and a dog, and who acted as their guide during the remainder of their stay in the mountains.

Martha believed the words of the young hunter; he was so frank and gallant, and handsome, so unlike the country lads whom she had met at the singing schools and spelling bees, and, when he went away, she thought it no harm to give him the kiss he asked for,

for had he not told her that he would return the next fall, when she was to be his wife and go away with him to a home such as she had dreamed of as she lay with her face to the open window and the stars?

Then there were great preparations in that simple home for the wedding which was to take place in the fall. Martha set to work at once to fit herself as far as possible for the new sphere in which she was to live. She borrowed such books as the neighborhood afforded and read them with loving eagerness—a “Model Letter Writer,” an old square leather-bound copy of “Scottish Chiefs,” Pinneo’s grammar, and a few others.

Two or three letters were received from Shore, in one of which he said that he was very busy in the office and that she must not expect to hear from him very often. She answered them as best she could, bestowing upon her letters infinite care, following the forms in

the "Model Letter Writer," misspelling half the words, and writing the address diagonally across the envelope in blue ink to make it look as pretty as possible. When his letters stopped she did not lose faith in him for a moment, but felt sure that he would come soon himself, and then the toiling in the fields would end.

That summer was the one which the people over at the Springs still speak of with horror. It was the summer of the black diptheria—you have heard them tell of it over and over, and you have always been thankful that chance or Providence led you that year to the White Mountains instead of to the Virginia Springs where you had gone every summer before. Those who could get away did so as fast as the old rickety stage-coach could carry them, but many were left behind, some to die the awful death.

Nurses could not be found, and Death, who fears the white cap and

hushed step of a faithful nurse more than a dozen doctors, held his awful carnival with none to dispute his reign. The country round about was in a panic, and no one would go near the scene of death—none but Martha. As soon as she learned that everybody else was afraid to go she started. No entreaties or commands could prevent her.

When she arrived at the Springs hotel she was directed to go at once to one of the little white private cottages adjoining the main building, where a lady, the wife of a man from Baltimore, was thought to be dying. She went without hesitation, and felt no fear. Softly opening the door she saw lying on the bed a young woman in great agony, and by her side, heart broken, knelt her husband.

He arose when she entered and turned towards her as one who appeals for hope and help when there is neither, and she saw before her Arthur Shore!

Neither spoke a word, and the agony

of the heart-broken husband as he stood there by the side of his dying wife was as nothing compared with the torture of the poor girl who bravely walked over to the bed, took the hand of the dying woman, and did everything in her power to relieve her sufferings. Such remedies as the girl had heard of were hastily tried, but the Angel of Death had made his mark on the door-post, and the sweet lady, who had never dreamed of her husband's perfidy, died with his kiss on her lips.

Martha helped to prepare her for burial, and put a little bunch of flowers in her grave when they buried her out in the sandy earth under the clump of chestnut trees to the east of the Lover's Walk—you remember it—which winds that way from the Springs.

As they turned again towards the empty little white cottage, Arthur said: "Can I ever be forgiven?" "Ask of her in the grave. She has much more to forgive than I," was the only reply.

When the contagion had died out, and there was nothing more that she could do, Martha returned to her home and took up her old life with no word of complaint, and next summer, as you go by in the old rickety stage-coach on your way to the famous old Springs, you will see her again among the corn rows as of old, but you will not know her, and she will not look up and smile and wave her hand to you as she used to do.

THE COMPANIONS

IN an old log house, among the Monongahela hills, there once lived a little lame girl. She had no playmates, and her friends and companions were such as she might make of the inanimate objects of nature around her. She was too delicate to hunt the wild flowers in the spring woodlands or coast on the winter snows, and was forced to sit all day long at her window or in the narrow yard, and watch the shepherds of the sky lead home their flocks, and hear the winds make ardent love to the pines and the poplars far away.

Every evening she threw a kiss from her small blue fingers to the departing sun, and every night she told her troubles to her confessor star, which

looked down upon her little bed under the clapboard roof.

But her dearest companion was a great poplar tree, which stood alone on a high hill, a mile from the house. It



was straight, gigantic, magnificent. The woodmen had left it there because they had not the heart to cut it down, and when the land was sold by its original owner, it was stated

in the deed that the great poplar was not to be disturbed. In its branches the bald eagles had nested ever since long before the cabin was built in the valley below, and the hawks that stood still in the sky like ships on a becalmed sea, dropped anchor in its topmost branches. It lifted its arms to high heaven for benedictions on all the lands, and gave the petals of its big yellow blossoms as love tokens to the winds.

The child looked upon this tree with awe. She wondered what great secret it held in its Titanic breast; what messages the winds and the birds carried to it from the oaks and beeches far away, and if it ever thought of her down there watching it for hours at a time. So much did its great strength and majesty impress the little invalid, that she lost all interest in the cloud-flocks of the skyey pastures, and no longer told her secrets to her starry confessor, but made the poplar her only companion and friend.

By and by her awe mellowed into love, and she would implore her father to carry her to the hilltop, that she might lay her face against the tree's mighty trunk. He told her she was foolish, and that she must not think about it again, but she continued to weave fancy after fancy, and her strange love grew stronger every day.

One night a terrific storm wrestled for hours with the giant of the hill, and

the next morning the child saw that a limb had been torn from its side and was lying on the ground. She cried as though her heart would break, for the great scar seemed to her childish imagination a bleeding wound. She must go to the tree at once and tell it how sorry she was. They found her at its foot exhausted and weeping. She had never walked so far before and the exertion, together with the excitement and sorrow of her tender heart, made her ill for days, and, in her delirium, she would reach out her hands towards the old poplar, and ask if it was much hurt.

Not long after this incident the land was sold again, and one of the first things the new owner did, was to fell the poplar for the purpose of rafting it with other logs and floating it down the river to Pittsburg.

The little child knew nothing of the impending fate of her companion, until she saw two sturdy axemen approach it

one morning, look admiringly at its huge trunk, decide which way it ought to fall, and then begin chopping.

In terror she started at once for the hill, which she climbed with great effort, but hoping only that she might not be too late to save her friend. She threw herself between the men and the tree, and commanded them not to touch it, for it belonged to her. But the men laughed at her commands, entreaties, and tears, and, in order to get rid of her, one of them carried her back to her home.

They felled the poplar, and every blow they struck seemed to sink into the heart of the child. Her agony was pitiful, and there was great fear that she would lose her mind. But she grew calm, and, without saying a word, watched the men saw the trunk into logs of the proper length,



hitch their oxen to them, and haul them down the hillside and away towards the river.

The day that the last log was taken away, the child was missing. Search was made everywhere about the place, but she could not be found. Then the neighbors were summoned, and a systematic hunt was made.

Little tracks were discovered in the broad, soft furrows made by the severed and prostrate trunk of her giant friend, as the oxen had dragged it to the river's edge. The searchers followed with anxious hearts and rapid steps, hoping and fearing.

The footprints led to the river, and there they found the dead body of the child with her arms about her old companion, and her pallid face resting against its shaggy trunk.

HAFED BEN HAFED

A LEGEND OF PERSIA

IT was in the reign of Malik Shah—may Allah rejoice his soul—that a mysterious rider, on a white horse, galloped across the salt sands from Naishàpùr in Khorasan to the tent of Hafed Ben Hafed. The stranger sat by the door of the tent, silent, till the sun went down. Then mounting his horse he said:

“Hafed Ben Hafed, art thou content?”

And he rode away like an arrow into the night.

Hafed Ben Hafed sat in his tent and pondered the words of the mysterious messenger, till the morning broke. Then he said to himself:

“No, I cannot be content until I



shall have slain mine enemy and the enemy of my clan."

And he arose and went into the mountains of Khorasan. When he returned to his tent there was one less enemy of Allah and his Prophet.

Again the mysterious rider galloped across the salt sands from Naishàpùr and stopped by the door of Hafed Ben Hafed's tent till the sun went down. Then mounting his horse he said:

"Hafed Ben Hafed, art thou content?"

And he rode away like an arrow into the night.

Hafed Ben Hafed sat in his tent and pondered the words of the mysterious messenger, till the morning broke. Then he said to himself:

"No, I cannot be content until I shall have become the ruler of the province."

And he arose and went towards the north and organized a band of soldiers. And when he returned to his tent he was accompanied by shoutings of



triumph. But he refused to give up his tent on the edge of the desert for a palace in the city.

And he continued to rule over the province and became a great favorite with Malik Shah.

Again the mysterious rider came across the salt sands and sat beside Hafed Ben Hafed's door till the sun went down. Then mounting his horse he said:

"Hafed Ben Hafed, art thou content?"

And he rode away like an arrow into the night.

Hafed Ben Hafed sat in his tent and pondered the words of the mysterious messenger, till the morning broke. Then he said to himself:

"No, I cannot be content until I shall have founded a dynasty and planted a throne for my descendants."



Then he arose and went to Teheran. And there began the bloodiest chapter in Persia's history, when the thirsty desert drank blood like water, when all the roses that bloomed in the valley were red like blood, and when, for the space of a year, there was not heard the note of a nightingale from the valley of the Tigris, east to Cabool.

But when the white roses began to bloom again, and the nightingales to



sing in the gardens of Persepolis, the people saluted Hafed Ben Hafed as ruler and king.

But he continued to live in his tent by the edge of the salt desert, with the door opening towards the rising sun.

Again the mysterious rider galloped across the salt sands from Naishàpùr, and sat before the

door of Hafed Ben Hafed till the sun went down. Then mounting his horse he said:

“Hafed Ben Hafed, art thou content?”

And he rode away like an arrow into the night.

Hafed Ben Hafed sat in his tent and pondered the words of the mysterious messenger, till the morning broke.

Then he arose and went to the door of his tent, and there he found a poor child of the desert, son of the enemy of his youth, whom he had slain with all his clan, in the mountains of Khorasan.

Hafed Ben Hafed took the child into his tent and gave him dates and pomegranates and choice wine, and said unto him:

“Thou son of mine ancient enemy, thou shalt be in future mine own son.”

And the child of the desert went and fetched a white rose and gave it to his benefactor. And Hafed Ben Hafed said:



“Now I am content. For every drop of blood that I have shed, there shall be planted a white rose tree throughout the land of my kingdom.”

And from that day Persia has been called the land of the white rose and the nightingale.

And the mysterious rider from across the salt sands stopped no more before the door of Hafed Ben Hafed's tent.







